# Interview with Cecil S. Richardson

Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

CECIL S. RICHARDSON

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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*Q: This is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training and I'm Charles Stuart Kennedy. To begin with, do you go by Cecil?*

RICHARDSON: Cy.

*Q: Cy. Okay. Let's start at the beginning. When and where were you born?*

RICHARDSON: New York City: 1926.

*Q: Could you tell me a bit about first your father and his side of the family and where the Richardson's come from and then your mother's side?*

RICHARDSON: Well, let's see. My father was born on the Dutch side of the Island of St. Martin. And my mother, an English woman, was born in Antigua.

*Q: So, in the Caribbean in other words.*

RICHARDSON: Right.

*Q: Well, let's talk about the Richardson's. How did they get there?*

RICHARDSON: To the Dutch side ... they were transported on a slave ship.

*Q: Well, how long were they there? I mean do you have any idea of the history?*

RICHARDSON: No. Probably in the eighteenth century ... the first one. Of course they weren't named Richardson then.

*Q: Well, what was your father doing, you know as a young man?*

RICHARDSON: Well, he was working in a store in St. Kitts. Many of his friends were moving to the United States. He followed them.

*Q: Your mother, what's her background?*

RICHARDSON: Her father was an Anglican minister. He came from England to serve in the West Indies. Her mother was from a family of plantation owners or managers.

*Q: So this is all in Antigua?*

RICHARDSON: No. I do not know where they married. My maternal grandfather had a number of parishes around the Caribbean, one of them being in St. Croix, American Virgin Islands, which as a result my uncle, my mother's brother, was born an American citizen.

*Q: Your grandfather.*

RICHARDSON: Early in the century, my maternal grandfather was reassigned to a church somewhere in the southwest of England. World War I started in '14 and he shipped the family back to the West Indies. He spent 4 years of the War in the trenches in France. For some reason, he either did not send for the family or my maternal grandmother chose not to rejoin him, and they remained separated. In the early ?20s my maternal grandmother came to the States. A sister of hers had moved to the U.S. somewhat earlier. The following

year, 1922, my mother and her brother followed her, but within nine months, my maternal grandmother died, and they were orphaned.

*Q: Where had they gone in the States?*

RICHARDSON: They went to Harlem where the family had friends.

*Q: What about your father, had he gone to Harlem too?*

RICHARDSON: Yes, that's where they met. They left the island of St. Kitts independently. They didn't know each other there. They were from different social classes. But they both ended up around 135th Street in Harlem.

*Q: I imagine, though, they probably, the way these things usually operate, they probably were essentially in colonies of, New York is full of clusters of people from different places that are very close.*

RICHARDSON: That's true. I can think of only 3 friends from my childhood who weren't children of West Indian families.

*Q: Well, did, what were your parents doing when they got to Harlem, were married, they were both very young.*

RICHARDSON: My mother, was she, was she even 18?

*Q: Your mother and her brother were orphaned very young. How did they sustain themselves?*

RICHARDSON: With the kindness of friends from the West Indies. After the marriage, my father worked as an elevator operator during the ?30s.

*Q: Of course, the thirties were a terrible time.*

RICHARDSON: Yes.

*Q: We're talking about with the depression and all, but you were born in '36.*

RICHARDSON: '26.

*Q: '26?*

RICHARDSON: Yes.

*Q: What do you recall, how do you, these were supposed to be the high years of Harlem, I mean as far as an interesting place, and all.*

RICHARDSON: Right, that was actually more in the twenties. That was the period of the Harlem Renaissance.

*Q: Oh, so the twenties. What was, how was it being in kid, young kid in Harlem when you were there?*

RICHARDSON: Well, we were poor. When both of my parents had jobs we would move to a nice apartment and when one of them would lose his job and he or she did not get another one pretty quickly we would move to less expensive quarters. Either to another building or to a higher floor in the same walk-up.

*Q: Well, what about as a kid, were you, did you get out and play stick ball and do a lot of things that kids in New York City did?*

RICHARDSON: I remember once getting a double playing stickball and then promptly got trapped off at second base with the hidden ball trick.

*Q: [Laughter]. What about, at home, did you have brothers and sisters?*

RICHARDSON: No, only child.

*Q: Was your family, did you all sit around at dinner together and talk and things like that.*

RICHARDSON: Yes, but they separated and divorced, when I was about 12.

*Q: Up to that time, where did you say you went to school?*

RICHARDSON: Well, it was PS 184 on a 116th Street between Lenox and Fifth Avenue. Two buildings, one elementary school, the other junior high (grades 6-9). The junior high had been a Jewish school. Not too many years before, this part of Harlem had been a predominantly Jewish neighborhood. The church across the street from the junior high building still had the Star of David from a pervious incarnation.

*Q: Well then, in school, how many subjects were particularly agreed with you or ...*

RICHARDSON: Most, I was a very good student up through junior high through the ninth grade.

*Q: Yes, I know about some communities, such as the Greeks, the Jewish, and Vietnamese and Korean which were within, a lot of emphasis put on education and seeing the success of so many West Indians in the United States, how about, I mean from your perspective, was there much emphasis on education?*

RICHARDSON: There was encouragement, but the response among the children was not good. I was just thinking that you might ask something like this. Of my personal friends, only 2 went directly to college from high school. Both of them children of professional men. The rest of us dropped out and went to work.

*Q: Was there at that time, much mixing between, I don't know if you want to call it, the native blacks and the island people coming over ...*

RICHARDSON: Most of our social contacts and associations were with other West Indians. I can remember my mother's had a good friend who was an American black. Of course, my mother worked in the Garment District so she had contact with all the great diversity of people and cultures in New York City.

*Q: What about as kids? I'm not a New Yorker so how about gangs or just ...*

RICHARDSON: No, none of my friends belonged to a gang, but there were streets we avoided because there were what we called hostile elements in those streets

*Q: I talked this with someone who said that he grew up, he was Jewish, and he grew up in a neighborhood, and he said he really didn't know if there were any people other than Jewish people, but he said there were places you just didn't go, they might be Italian, they might be Irish ... everybody has their little map of don't go to places.*

RICHARDSON: Yes, there were streets of Harlem we did not ever go. But when my mother came to the United States, she was very surprised to find that there were Jews here. She had thought of them as ancient figures in biblical history and then she came to New York City.

*Q: The stories that come out of that area, people working, living in these little islands and then finally making, moving out, how about in grammar school, was this a pretty mixed bag or not?*

RICHARDSON: What, racially?

*Q: Yes.*

RICHARDSON: No, there was one Jewish kid in PS 184. His father was the Yiddish term for it, caretaker of a small synagogue on 114th Street. He represented integration at that

time. [Laughter]. We used to live on 114th Street and I can remember as a kid passing this little storefront synagogue before the High Holidays and smelling the wine he was making.

*Q: Did, was there anything when you were in elementary school, by the time you got to junior high and all, was there anything that I guess we would call black studies today or was this ...*

RICHARDSON: No, there was Black History Week which my school observed. Now I think it's Black History Month.

*Q: Yes. How did you find your teachers? Do you remember any of your teachers?*

RICHARDSON: Yes. Mrs. Citron from the third or fourth grade. I liked her. She was well known in this city and caught hell during the McCarthy period.

*Q: Oh, yes. J. Parnell Thomas and somebody from Texas.*

RICHARDSON: She came under fire during that time. But I do not remember anything politically tainted in the classroom at that age.

*Q: But, looking back on it were, do you think it sort of the elementary and junior high level ... did you get a good education, you think?*

RICHARDSON: Oh, yes. It was very good school. It is sad, the condition that public education has come to. No, it was first rate. It got me into one of three of the finest high schools in New York City, Stuyvesant High, and I could have gotten into either of the other there, too, Bronx High School of Science or Townsend Harris.

*Q: Well, I mean you didn't find that there had been a breakdown so that the United States educational delivery system wasn't curtailed by Harlem or anything like that.*

RICHARDSON: No, I don't think so.

*Q: Well, obviously.*

RICHARDSON: But anyway, but the system is breaking down everywhere, whatever the cause, either the poor response of the students, or the lack of high expectations on the part of the teachers.

*Q: Discipline, I mean you know.*

RICHARDSON: Motivation, discipline...

*Q: All sorts of things. But we knew that it was, we were supposed to get on with it.*

RICHARDSON: Yes, there was discipline in the classroom. There was no rapping of knuckles with a ruler or physical intimidation by the teachers, but there was never any real defiance of the authority of the teacher.

*Q: No. When one went to high school in the New York City at that time with good enough grades you could pick your school.*

RICHARDSON: I do not remember if I took an exam to get into Stuyvesant or if they simply took me on the basis of my record. I think they took me on the basis of my record.

*Q: Well, tell me about Stuyvesant.*

RICHARDSON: Well, there's an end to happy children. I, for some reason, and I never went to a shrink, lost interest in school and with the result that when I went into the army, I was drafted at 18, I still had only a ninth grade education, but somewhere along the way I had picked up tenth grade math. I went to work at 16.

*Q: But, what as you recall, did you go to Stuyvesant?*

RICHARDSON: I went and then I stopped going and I never really sat down with a shrink to figure out why. Perhaps at that time I could have used a shrink because obviously I was going through some real confusion in my life.

*Q: Well, your parents had broken up ...*

RICHARDSON: Yes, yes.

*Q: Yes, and you don't have to be a shrink to know that there may be some connection with that.*

RICHARDSON: Yes, right.

*Q: What about, could you just plain drop out at 16?*

RICHARDSON: Well, yes, you can get working papers at 16.

*Q: So what did you go into doing when you dropped out, did you like your work?*

RICHARDSON: Yes, at 16, though. This was during the war so, '42 so there was no problem getting a job.

*Q: What were you doing?*

RICHARDSON: First, I took a job delivering, but soon I got into a war plant and I handled the supply room and did shipping and a variety of things.

*Q: Did, so by the time you were 18 in what was it '44, was it?*

RICHARDSON: '44.

*Q: So you were prime draft?*

RICHARDSON: Oh, sure.

*Q: So you were drafted.*

RICHARDSON: Yes, I tried to get in earlier. I got my hands on a relative's birth certificate and registered for the draft under his name when I was 17. When papers from the draft board arrived, my mother kind of went through the roof.

*Q: [Laughter]*

RICHARDSON: She marched me down to the draft board and exposed my story so that I had to wait another year until I was drafted.

*Q: So what did they do with you?*

RICHARDSON: What in the army?

*Q: Yes.*

RICHARDSON: Oh, so they sent me to basic training and Fort McClellan, Alabama. After training, I shipped out to Europe on the old Queen Mary in time to get one battle star.

*Q: What, was there any particular division?*

RICHARDSON: Yes, I was in the Seventeenth Airborne Division. When the war ended, I didn't have enough points to come home so I was transferred to the 82nd Airborne for the occupation of Berlin, so it was an interesting time.

*Q: Oh, very interesting time. You a paratrooper or glider infantry?*

RICHARDSON: Glider Rider. I went to jump school after the 82nd returned to the U.S.

*Q: Where did they put you, when you were out in the battle?*

RICHARDSON: Yes, but in division headquarters.

*Q: The airborne. The army was moving too fast to use them, though.*

RICHARDSON: Crossing the Rhine was the last Airborne operation of the war. There were British paratroopers, gliders of the British Airborne and the 17th in the operation. One-third of my platoon jumped in, one third went in by a glider and my third crossed the Rhine in landing craft.

*Q: Well, how long were you in Germany in the occupation of Berlin?*

RICHARDSON: Until, until November 1945.

*Q: So April, May.*

RICHARDSON: Before we went to Berlin from France we were in Epinal, a lovely part of France. I left the division the month before it left Berlin for the U.S.

*Q: What was going on in life when you were there?*

RICHARDSON: The center of Berlin was one pile of rubble that was unimaginable. That's all you could see, climb up on a pile of rubble and all you'd see was more rubble to the horizon. I'm taking my wife there at the end of this month. Scenes in the movie, “The Pianist,” reminded me of Berlin in ?45.

*Q: The was a movie called the Pianist and it showed both sides at the end of the War.*

RICHARDSON: It was like that.

*Q: Oh, what were you doing?*

RICHARDSON: In Berlin?

*Q: Yes.*

RICHARDSON: Well, I was in the division Military Police so we were keeping the troops from getting into too much trouble.

*Q: I would imagine that the troops, there wasn't anything else to do, but get into trouble, was there?*

RICHARDSON: Oh, you do when you occupy, you keep order and enforce the orders of the occupying authorities.

*Q: Well, in a way of a, I'm sure the population of Berlin was so depressed, those who were left and they weren't going to have any particular problems with the rules.*

RICHARDSON: They were no problem, we had more trouble keeping our troops, because they're pretty rambunctious guys.

*Q: I was going to say, a bunch of, a bunch of, hepped up paratroopers at the very end of the War, so much testosterone and the air is so hard to be an MP, you must have had your, was there a black market?*

RICHARDSON: A big black market, big black market.

*Q: Yes.*

RICHARDSON: Well, the cartons of cigarettes for which we paid, I don't know, was it a dollar? Two dollars? It sold for a hundred dollars on the black market so the temptation was to give up smoking.

*Q: I did when I was in Korea and a couple years later there was the Vietnam War. Did, now the war was over, you're an MP, you guys were going to be pulled out fairly soon, what were you thinking about doing?*

RICHARDSON: Well, I stayed in longer than I needed to because I had a chance to go to Alaska to test material in the winter of '46-'47. I spent the winter in Central Alaska outside of Fairbanks testing equipment and men. Because the Department of Defense didn't really know much about fighting in the Russian Winter and the Germans had lots of experience, we had German handbooks translated into English. I still I think I threw my last ones away a couple of years ago. We were up there with a company of paratroopers, artillery, tanks, engineers and spent the Winter seeing how equipment, clothing, and men functioned in extreme cold.

*Q: Were there mistakes?*

RICHARDSON: There was one infantry operation with tanks where we stood out there in the open in 40 below for three hours before the tanks showed up. I think that this was deliberate to create an opportunity to observe how the infantry performed after three hours in extreme cold. There were accidents, too. We lost one trooper but not on a jump.

*Q: Good, God. How does that work, I mean?*

RICHARDSON: On our first jump we landed on a plowed field of a dairy outside of Fairbanks. It was similar to the plowed field we used in South Carolina. Well, this field, unlike what we were used to, was as hard as concrete. I made a bad 3-point landing, heels, butt, back of the head. I was groggy and there is a photo of me being led off the field by hand by a fellow named Andrew Jackson Barnes III. He claimed descent from AJ. Our last jump, on the contrary, was pure pleasure. We came down on the same field, but this time it was covered by two to four feet of snow. In addition, we used a new aircraft from which we exited by a rear cargo door avoiding the prop blast we were used to in C-47 and C-46 airplanes. The whole thing was so delightful that I just lay in the snow instead of jumping up and getting on with the operation. Lieutenant Garcia, thinking that I must be injured, crawled through the snow to get to me and was not happy to find me reveling in

the experience. “Get up, you son of a bitch.” He was so pissed off, but I wasn't worried. It was my last jump and by far the best.

*Q: Oh, well after this experience did you want to head south again, or does the cold weather appeal to you?*

RICHARDSON: Oh, no. This was great. This was one of the great adventures of my life. We gained confidence. We learned, we used skies, we used snowshoes. They gave us a four-man tent and a stove and blankets and stuff like that and a sled and a harness with which we could pull the sled and we did. And we pull the sled and set up at night and the next morning knock it down and pack and pull the sled again. This was great when you were at the age of, what was I then? That's marvelous.

*Q: Oh, yes.*

RICHARDSON: I don't know if you have ever heard of him, but I think General Gavin was the youngest division commander during the War.

*Q: Oh, yes.*

RICHARDSON: General Gavin, commander of the 82nd, came up from North Carolina to see what we were doing. We were going to put on a demonstration jump for him and it was at that time, I think it was to be the farthest North mass jump. The jump was canceled because the coldest I can remember seeing was 60 below. That night, I never got to sleep because somehow I let my feet get cold and could never get them warmed up, so I spent a sleepless night, but that's the only bad thing I remember. We had a snow “pool” on the snowfall.

*Q: Yes, well a “pool.”*

RICHARDSON: Guess how many feet of snow they're going to see. Someone guessed a fantastic 18 feet. Well, no one came close. We had only 3 or 4 feet where we were based.

*Q: Well, by this time were you thinking about getting out of the military?*

RICHARDSON: I left in 1947. I got called back into the Reserves during the Korean War, the only time I thought of perhaps a career of it. In 1947, I wanted to get back, get home, and go to school so I came back to finish high school in a year.

My experience with race in the Army may be worth a mention in that I served in three different armies from the standpoint of race: segregated white, integrated, and segregated negro. I had registered for the draft as white. I had heard that the Negroes were being issued shovels and I wanted a gun. But when President Truman ordered racial integration of the military, I had my personal record changed to read negro and as a negro I was recalled as a reservist during the Korean War. But my experience in the integrated Army lasted only six months when I was transferred from an integrated unit to the newly-created 25th Signal Battalion (NEGRO). Guess someone did not get the message. This incident did get me a letter to the editor published in the Sunday “New York Times.”

*Q: When did you graduate from Queens?*

RICHARDSON: 1953.

*Q: What year did you graduate?*

RICHARDSON: Let's see. Probably '53 because I got called back to the Reserves and spent a year and a half in the Army and then went back and finished school.

*Q: What, what were you doing when they called you back, were you back in the paratroopers?*

RICHARDSON: Oh, no. No, no. I was in, finished up in the 25th Signal Battalion and never went overseas. I didn't, in fact, I didn't leave commuter distance of New York City so it was kind of a waste of my time and their money.

*Q: But you went back to Queens College.*

RICHARDSON: Yes.

*Q: And got your degree in what, '53 then about?*

RICHARDSON: Yes, that must have been because I was working for 3 or 4 years before I entered the Foreign Service.

*Q: What did you do?*

RICHARDSON: I was in the general area of social work, I was working for the Department of Welfare in New York because that was what I had planned to do.

*Q: What, how about let's talk about social welfare in New York City, we're told it's a middle class Jewish relief after Korea, I mean heavily dominated by the Jewish population.*

RICHARDSON: But as the recipients or as the administration?

*Q: Administration.*

RICHARDSON: There were a number of Jews who were in it, but there were a lot of other people, too. My immediate supervisor was a lady of Italian extraction and my fellows, the other people in my unit were other groups, German, there were a great variety, but yes, the boss of my supervisor was Jewish.

*Q: You were doing what?*

RICHARDSON: There was fascinating case work because my district extended from 5th Avenue to the East River, the North Side of 32nd Street to the South side of 105th. I still had some Irish down on 32nd Street in that area. I had Puerto Ricans in the ?90s and I had blacks in 105th Street and in between I had Germans in Yorkville, I had one woman who, when I went to look, to look up her background I had to look in a book of European nobility, the Almanac de Gotha. That's where I had to look up her family. It was a fascinating caseload. Now they were all depressing.

*Q: What were you finding and what were you doing about it?*

RICHARDSON: Well, I looked after people receiving public assistance. I would see how they were managing in terms of what was available to them and make sure they were getting it. If there were children to go to school, to make sure that they were well cared for and had the materials, the books, pencils and so forth, clothing and shoes to start the new school year.

*Q: Well, how did you find your clientele, were they doing what they should do and all?*

RICHARDSON: Yes, I had so many who reached retirement age. Working people who reached retirement age, went down and applied for Social Security, got their first Social Security check, and realized they couldn't live on it and they didn't have any savings. So they go to the Welfare office and apply for welfare and the idea was to keep them in their homes, in their apartments, because there was no financial savings, you know, squeezing them so they would go someplace else, there wasn't any other place to go, but in those days, unlike today, there was modest cost housing available. We've lost a lot of that inexpensive housing and that's another problem. But there was housing then that was reasonably priced where the poor could live.

*Q: But again, we're talking about a reasonably disciplined group that were looking, they needed extra help.*

RICHARDSON: And then there were, I used to work with, not delinquent children, not latch key children, but single parent households, mothers whom we didn't require to go out to work then. We wanted them home to supervise the children. Society has changed since then and now they're happy to drive them out into jobs, into minimum wage jobs. Who's looking after the children?

*Q: But you were saying, but I mean, this is not something where you were, going out today can be very depressing to do this type of work.*

RICHARDSON: But it, there is nothing depressing, I would not find it depressing. Something changed later on, but then adult children were considered responsible for their parents. They and putative fathers could be taken to court to force them to contribute to the welfare recipient's support. Sometimes we realized that they were providing a telephone for their parents, which is something they would not be entitled to on a welfare budget. So we would go there and the client would be terrified that the phone would ring. But I didn't find it depressing at all because I felt that we were in a situation where we were actually helping people at that time. We weren't pursuing them because they were Pariahs or something like that. We didn't talk about “Welfare Queens.”

*Q: How did you find the city, the administration, was there concern of sort of a Patronage Tax System?*

RICHARDSON: Do you mean in the city?

*Q: Yes, the city.*

RICHARDSON: I didn't have anything at all. I once voted for a man named Impellateri because I thought he was against the system and he turned out to be as big a part of the machine (Tammany Hall) as anyone else so I pretty much withdrew from local politics. [Laughter]

*Q: Well, then. In all this time, in school, with family, military, social service and all and getting caught up in wars, did International Affairs intrude, you know the Cold War or what was going abroad, the creation of Israel?*

RICHARDSON: No, I was very conscious of them and had an interest in what was going on, I remember the period, was '48 before Israel was founded, the discussions of the UN, what they were going to, how it was going to be arranged and that map, it looked like a mosaic.

*Q: Did, had you run across anybody who was involved in the foreign affairs?*

RICHARDSON: This was a constant discussion at the university either during class or otherwise. Also, this was the time of McCarthy so politics and foreign affairs and what was going on in the world was very much a daily diet.

*Q: What about communism, sort of home-grown communism, cause New York, as an immigrant community and all, many of them came out of Europe, many of them brought the sort of socialist/communist point of view when you had the Daily Worker and you had other papers and one thing the left being rather vocal anyway and did you run across that?*

RICHARDSON: Oh, sure we had a couple of, at least one devoted communist on campus, but what is funny, she turned out to be married to a fellow I served with in World War II so we all got together and I was at their house one night when they were having a party and they played the Internationale and everybody stood up, but it wasn't serious, they were very much of the left and they would probably describe themselves as communists and readers of the “Daily Worker.” I had, I had friends all over the spectrum. This was a guy I met in basic training during World War II, and I was going to school with his wife.

*Q: Well then, how did you, you were doing social work for what about 3 years?*

RICHARDSON: 3 years, yes.

*Q: And then what?*

RICHARDSON: Then I past the exam and entered the Foreign Service in '56.

*Q: Well, how did you hear about it, I mean how did you know about it?*

RICHARDSON: We were talking on campus, a whole bunch of us went down and took it: Bill Woessner who later was DCM in Bonn. Do you know him, you know Billy?

*Q: Yes.*

RICHARDSON: I'm the only person who calls him Billy. After he left school he became Bill. No, we are friends going back to the mid-'50s, no, no earlier ... sure, the late ?40s because he had a party for me when I was going back into the Army.

*Q: Well what was, was there any particular push to take the Foreign Service Exam?*

RICHARDSON: Oh, yes. Well, one thing that was in my mind is I thought that they owed me. Here I'd been to Europe in World War II and had never so much as gotten so much as a 3-day pass to go to Paris or any other interesting place, Copenhagen or the Riviera, I had one guy go to the Riviera and so I felt cheated, I went to Berlin which was a rubble heap so there was always a resentment. I came back, and was going to go back to school, but I planned next summer I'm going to take that student boat to Europe, and next summer came and of course I'm 23 years old and I need those 6 credits. Each summer was like that until finally the last summer came, I got my degree and I was too broke to go anywhere [Laughter] and I had to go to work. So I felt that they owed me and so I took the exam and I was accepted.

*Q: Well, you take, you took the oral exam too?*

RICHARDSON: Yes.

*Q: Do you recall anything on the oral exam?*

RICHARDSON: Yes, the opening line. The first words they said, I've got four guys sitting up there and I'm sitting here in my double-breasted blue suit and the first thing one says to me was, “Mr. Richardson: Your mother was white and your father was colored”... or maybe he said Negro? and what a beginning ... so I said, yes, yes, that's right. So I mean you know what [Laughter] ... and that was the end of that discussion. But that was the opening, and I was conscious of it.

*Q: Yes, oh I can imagine.*

RICHARDSON: But, of course, at that time there weren't many blacks, Negroes, or colored or whatever the term was and the Department was conscious of it.

*Q: Yes, it was you know ... I won't even say things were changing because I don't think they changed for some time.*

RICHARDSON: But, there was consciousness that, so, they didn't set out, they did not have a formal affirmative action program, but there was an inclination, an interest in recruiting, they hadn't formalized it, but ...

*Q: So in a way, you think this comment was more almost on the positive side than the negative side.*

RICHARDSON: Well, I, they knew this from the record, they didn't have to ask the question. What I've always suspected is that they wanted to see what my reaction was to the question.

*Q: Yes, well, I mean I used to be on the panel of various things and would have never done that, but this is 20 years later so, but we were interested in reactions, you know I*

*mean because somebody you know if it was something you might come up against and you don't want to, you want to find out ...*

RICHARDSON: Or how the person reacts under stress.

*Q: Stress.*

RICHARDSON: Stress, does this cause any stress, how does he react? I mean, you know I was you know yes, that's right.

*Q: [Laughter] Do you recall any other questions?*

RICHARDSON: Yes. Embarrassing one about the Reconstruction 1870, and the election, on which I showed abysmal ignorance. [Laughter] I think it all worked out, I just washed out. [Laughter].

*Q: Well, I used to give the oral exam and sometimes we had people who used to get the Civil War and the Revolutionary War mixed up, you know, I mean [Laughter]*

RICHARDSON: I didn't ... I don't think I made any mistakes because I don't ever remember saying “I don't know” in so many different forms in my life. No, that, I don't recall that period and I don't think I ever knew that. There was something of total ignorance, but I handled that.

*Q: By this time had you run across anyone who had been in the Foreign Service to find out what the hell you're going to do?*

RICHARDSON: No.

*Q: Did you have any feel for what you might be doing?*

RICHARDSON: Yes. I was going to somehow affect ... eventually the world. It was an adventure and you don't always know when you're going to climb the mountain, you don't really know exactly where you're going to put your feet.

*Q: Well, I think most of us were in that position. What, when did you come in to the Foreign Service?*

RICHARDSON: '56. It would have been in July of '56, in fact, the anniversary of which was last year. That must have been 47th?

*Q: Yes.*

RICHARDSON: '56 to '03, yes.

*Q: Yes, well do you recall, what was your class like?*

RICHARDSON: That was a good bunch. We were very small, I mean I look at the classes now a days and ... .

*Q: Do you have a number on it?*

RICHARDSON: 16, that's all. 16. and Harry Cahill who is still around here ...

*Q: Right, I know Harry, we served in Belgrade together.*

RICHARDSON: Oh, yes. Did he, you know his wife?

*Q: Oh, yes.*

RICHARDSON: Well, I haven't seen her ...

*Q: Nikki.*

RICHARDSON: Nikki. Argentinean. I haven't seen her since '56, but I remember she just charmed us all. Absolutely charming girl.

*Q: Oh, she's very nice.*

RICHARDSON: Yes, several, one fellow left, oh ... I believe that's the only name I remember, but Dick Christiansen, he ended up in, retired in Southwest somewhere, yes, but it was a small enough class and one of them, I think, yes, he decided that he was going to leave before we finished the A-100 course, he decided that he could have more of an impact if he went to work for a congressmen than if he worked his way up within the Foreign Service. I once wrote the poem for Harry Cahill, a Dadaist poem that went something like “The ashtray grows but a short walk down the hall.” And I've forgotten the rest of it. [Laughter]. I hope he has preserved it. [Laughter]

*Q: Well now, where did you, where were you assigned your first post?*

RICHARDSON: Dakar. And now that was interesting because you know when I did the A-100 course there weren't any Negroes around State except in janitors and messengers and so I thought I was unique in the service and I found out later on that Liberia was only entry post for Negroes. That's the term that was used at the time.

*Q: Let me ask a question. Did you feel “Negro,” “Colored,” “Black” or something at that time, because looking at you, and so often I wouldn't, I couldn't categorize you as anything, but I mean, how did you, did you consider yourself to be part of a group or not?*

RICHARDSON: Well, in my particular circumstance, I'd lived in an integrated society, at least in a small group of people, all my life.

*Q: Well, I was going to say for example, in the Army, you must ...*

RICHARDSON: Oh, well, no. In the Army, I wanted a gun and they weren't giving guns to Negroes, they were giving them shovels, so when I registered for the draft, I registered as white.

*Q: Yes.*

RICHARDSON: And that's how I got into 2 elite airborne units.

*Q: Well, does the question ever come up or not?*

RICHARDSON: No, once you say you're this, that's what you are.

*Q: Yes, but you know the whole categorization is so fallacious anyway that ...*

RICHARDSON: Well that was the way things were categorized so in making an assignment, they're not looking at the person, they're looking at an information sheet ... white ... you can go to that one ... black ... you go to that one.

*Q: Well then, but when you went to, you went to Dakar first.*

RICHARDSON: Yes.

*Q: Did you take French before going?*

RICHARDSON: No. They gave me a week or two which I don't know. It looked like, that, I've always suspected, was a design for failure because to go in an entirely foreign language ... here's what my responsibilities were, I was the admin. officer, the only admin officer. So I was the administrative officer, I was the general services officer, which is fairly heavy and also the consular officer. In consular function I had a consular assistant who worked, also served as American Secretary and on the administrative side, I had an administrative secretary, a French woman who also did my translations of leases and things like that. But to send somebody out with no more French, with no French, into an

entirely French speaking environment with those responsibilities, looked like somebody was trying to sabotage the operation. Anyway, they didn't succeed.

*Q: Well, let's talk about Dakar and you were there in ?50s?*

RICHARDSON: '56 to early, early January '59.

*Q: So, I mean this is really before the, you want to call it the de-colonization of Africa.*

RICHARDSON: Yes.

*Q: I mean this is sort of the old Africa still.*

RICHARDSON: Yes.

*Q: What is Dakar like?*

RICHARDSON: Dakar was a French city set down in the West Coast of Africa. Abidjan was even more so, but Dakar was French. You had French restaurants. I ate entrecote grill# every night for three months because that was the only dish I knew in French. [Laughter].

*Q: Well, yes, we have to stick to the facts. [Laughter].*

RICHARDSON: Yes, well it was, it had a good climate, too. The weather time of the year in the fall, what would be the winter, where you would not be uncomfortable wearing a jacket.

*Q: It was Consulate General at the time, wasn't it?*

RICHARDSON: Yes.

*Q: And it had essentially, it was sort of the administrative capital for a whole series of places that later became...*

RICHARDSON: Yes, my consular district was about 2/3 the size of the United States. It extended all the way down to the border of Nigeria, Algeria to the north, Sudan to the east, and to French Equatorial Africa in the south.

*Q: Yes.*

RICHARDSON: Well, I left in '59 for Saigon, came back to West Africa 3 years later and what had been my Consular district, one political unit, was something like 7 or 8 independent countries. [Laughter]. All of the sudden, you're crossing a border whereas before you could travel thousands of miles or kilometers, whichever you prefer, without ever having presented your passport in customs.

*Q: Well, how was the Consul General when you got there?*

RICHARDSON: Mallory Brown who was I think of USIA and the next one was Don Dumont who was out of the Africa office, Africa Bureau in State.

*Q: Well, what was, I mean did you get any feel for Africa per se or was this so French that it was, you lived in a French world, or not?*

RICHARDSON: One tread carefully between two worlds. All significant authorities were French. The instructors, the teachers were French. Colonel John Edwards, political officer, who was the representative of another agency, advised me when I arrived, “You cannot mix at a small social event the Africans and the French.” And I thought, oh my he's old fashioned, we're moving into the new world. Well, I had a dinner one night and I carefully chose the guests, they had all gone to the same university, Toulouse, and they were young, young open to ideas, and had been, had the same university experience. Well, out of all the entertaining my wife and I had done in all of these years, that was the worst

evening and if it hadn't been for the wife of a Frenchmen, an extremely vivacious young woman, who never stopped talking, it would have been an even worse evening. My wife and I couldn't wait for it to end. [Laughter].

*Q: You mentioned a wife. When did you acquire a significant other?*

RICHARDSON: A week before I left for my first post.

*Q: What was her background and where did you meet her?*

RICHARDSON: She was a teacher in New York, went to City College of the city university. She was teaching when I met her in April of '56 and we married in November.

*Q: Well, did she speak French?*

RICHARDSON: No, but she has a remarkable capacity for communication and it doesn't matter whether she speaks the language or not. She communicates ... .

*Q: I know. Some people can.*

RICHARDSON: Amusingly, she, of course, picked up kitchen French, kitchen Spanish, kitchen Farsi. But, a Frenchman once said to her, “Madame Richardson, you speak French perfectly without any agreement of verbs.”

*Q: What, where you studying French while you were there?*

RICHARDSON: Oh, yes. I had to.

*Q: Did you ever get Nicola Declare, I don't know what the term is, but “out in the brush or something, sort of beyond the French orbit and all?”*

RICHARDSON: No, no. I was busy. I was busy with 3 functions and when we were closed on the weekend, there was a note on the door that said if you need to contact someone

from the Consulate, call Mr. Richardson and gave my phone number. I was permanent duty officer.

*Q: Oh, how nice. [Laughter]. Did we have any particular ...*

RICHARDSON: My wife got to travel while I was trapped in town. The single women there had to put her to the test before they would travel with her. She was the only American-born wife. The consul general's, no, not Mallory Brown, but Don Dumont's wife was Moroccan-born French. Tony's wife was German, Marcel Vanessen's wife was Belgian, Colonel Edward's wife was Swiss. My wife was the only American-born wife. We had some great single women, Pat Wiggleswort and Joan Clark and Jeanne Vertafeuille. The latter was instrumental in unmasking the “mole” at CIA a couple of years ago.

*Q: Ames?*

RICHARDSON: Ames, that was, if that was the one because I get confused, one of them was at the CIA.

*Q: Ames was CIA.*

RICHARDSON: Well, she was instrumental in unmasking him and she, her picture was on Newsweek or Time.

*Q: Well, how do you say that the single women tested your wife?*

RICHARDSON: Yes.

*Q: How does that work?*

RICHARDSON: Well, they all went out one weekend in a van, went to visit an important Muslim shrine at Touba, and the van broke down. So they have to take refuge for the night in the home of a Lebanese merchant out there in the bush. And she evidently comported

herself well because when she came back the girls thought she was alright [Laughter]. And she went off, she then traveled with Jean, my secretary and the consul general's secretary, to Timbuktu by boat on the Niger. Another time, they went off together, just the two of them, to Mauritania by commercial truck. Purely by chance they were at the founding of the new capital of Mauritania, Nouakchott, the day they founded Nouakchott and they brought back amusing photographs of signs mounted on stakes driven into the sand that said: “Gendarmerie” and “Palais de Justice.”

*Q: Well, what ...*

RICHARDSON: But, this I have to tell you. They did this to me twice. I had no wife at home and no secretary at the office. It was a bad time. So I fixed them, it was the best gag I've ever pulled in my life so I'm using this as an occasion to spread it. I was out at the airport when they came back from Mauritania. They had gone up by truck and then they flew back. So I'm out at the airport and this DC-3 comes bouncing down the field and I put on the longest face I could. And they're bubbling over and they're very excited about seeing me and they're not noticing that I'm not looking all that happy. Finally, it dawned on one of them that I'm not showing sufficient enthusiasm about their return, so they asked me, “What's wrong? What's the matter? Aren't you glad to see me?” So I said, “It's just a damn good thing for you two that my mistress knows how to type!” [Laughter]. And I didn't have any problems with them going off together again. But, I never pulled a better gag than that one. And that happened early in the marriage, you know. [Laughter]. I've never been able to match that one.

*Q: Well then, how about some of the work you were doing? Was it difficult working in Dakar or not?*

RICHARDSON: Difficult. Well, don't forget this was my first post, everything was brand new and I didn't have French, at least at first. Before I went, the staff had been living in really crummy facilities that had been made available by the local French government.

The consul general was living in a big house, also made available by the French, but I saw these awful buildings that my predecessor had lived in when he first went to the post. It was pretty grim, but Department opened up and he was able to lease two grand apartments. They were only one bedroom, but they were big. So that's what I went into so I had good housing, I could have a party. There's lots of space for entertaining, but only one bedroom. So they gave us permission to lease 0other places and that's when I got into leasing, when I hired a French woman to act as my administrative secretary and translate and she did the leases for me so that was interesting. That was a major activity, getting housing for the staff. They no longer had to go out on the market on their own. On the Consular side, there was very, very little, very little. Not like today where West Africa is busy with Visas. There were almost no visas.

*Q: Did you get visitors through there?*

RICHARDSON: At that time, I never saw a congressman in the two years I was in Dakar. Then we opened Abidjan as a consulate, as a constituent post while I was there and there was some working connection with that. The Consul General didn't feel like going, so he sent me down to inspect it, which was pretty presumptuous. I'm going down to inspect Consul Park Massey. He was a veteran of World War II with the same 17th Airborne division I had, but he was a senior officer and I'm being sent down there to inspect him, but things went off alright.

*Q: When Senegal didn't ...*

RICHARDSON: De Gaulle came down and made his tour of West Africa, not only West Africa, but Equatorial Africa also and plugged the new 5th Republic constitution. Guinea chose to leave the Community. And so that was exciting.

*Q: Yes, that was when the French pulled and took the faucets and light fixtures.*

RICHARDSON: Yes, yes.

*Q: They were going to show the Guineans ...*

RICHARDSON: Yes, I'm trying to remember, it was still in tact when I left, but they were going to vote. So there was excitement in connection, who was going to do what to whom. There was a territorial assembly in Dakar. So all of these people like Houphouet-Boigny, Sekou Toure, Leopold Senghor, and Diori were all there in Dakar, political figures from the territories, who later became presidents of new countries.

*Q: Well, were we making any effort to cultivate these people?*

RICHARDSON: No and certainly not with ...

*Q: I recall interviewing somebody who was involved at this time in one of the places like Ivory Coast or some place, one of the slower places, saying that Dakar was sort of, really didn't want to give up the colonial ... empire, this was on the American side, they were not very forthcoming because they felt they were the center of the universe and they had very much a colonial attitude.*

RICHARDSON: I think that would be true. That would be my estimate also. Yes, and they were very pro-French. I don't know if this would illustrate that, but at one time because my secretary and my wife did so much traveling, they got written up in the local French paper suggesting they were involved in espionage and the French intelligence went to my Consul General and accused my wife of transporting, transmitting, carrying messages to, for the FLN in Algeria. And he did not, he didn't treat it with the skepticism I thought he should have. He was totally unsupportive. Inspectors came out in early December of '58 to check on these reports. I think they were also looking to see how well prepared the post was for the oncoming independence, but while they were there, they took the trouble to reassure me that I shouldn't worry about this accusation, but it really disturbed my wife.

*Q: Oh, of course it did, yes.*

RICHARDSON: And she got, we got no support, she got no support from my Consul General.

*Q: Well, in a way, many of our people early on were sort of in the pockets of the French, in a way wouldn't you say?*

RICHARDSON: Well, the other agency, I was not aware of any contacts they had. They may have had because certainly these people were going to lead these territories and independence was coming soon. So I liked to think that they were in contact, but I never saw it.

*Q: Yes.*

RICHARDSON: And also, the French were very suspicious and if they saw us cultivating Africans, they would have resented it.

*Q: Well, this is of course, this went on in particular during the early years, but has gone on and even exists somewhat today and that is the French not really trusting, thinking the Americans have designs on these places which from an American point of view, "Why the hell would we have designs, let the French take care of it."*

RICHARDSON: Even after independence.

*Q: Oh, yes.*

RICHARDSON: The only time we got interested in new independent states was when we needed votes in the UN to keep China out. Otherwise, if there hadn't been China, I don't think we would have ever gotten interested.

*Q: Did, while you were there, were the French were fighting the FLN in Algeria, weren't they?*

RICHARDSON: Yes, yes.

*Q: Did that intrude at all into concerns of ...*

RICHARDSON: No, no. The only time was when my wife was accused of being a messenger for the FLN [Laughter]. I don't know to whom she was supposed to deliver the messages.

*Q: Well, I, you know, I'm sure security people don't like to see people travel, foreigners, it makes them nervous.*

RICHARDSON: Yes.

*Q: Well, so in early '59 you were due to leave and what happened?*

RICHARDSON: Then, after spending 2 years as Admin, General Services, and Consular Officer in Dakar, they sent me to French training in Nice, with a humble assignment in the Department. Now you tell me, does that make any sense?

*Q: [Laughter].*

RICHARDSON: At breakfast in Nice one day, I got into a conversation with a man who was also taking the course. He was going out to be DCM or Political Counselor in Laos and I had been reading about Indochina and I said to him, you know how much I was envying him, I'd love to get out there. Well, I planted the seed in the right place, unknowingly. Because when I got back to Washington and reported to the desk, they said oh, you're not staying here. Go down the hall and see the people in whatever the Bureau is ...

*Q: Southeast Asia.*

RICHARDSON: Southeast Asia. I went to Saigon, which delighted me. That was a good time to be there. The French war was over a couple of years and the American War had not yet started. It was a war alright. It was a Vietnamese War, but this was the period when they were developing the plan, how to win the hearts and minds of the people and send in the Green Berets and small groups to give medical attention and this and that. That was when that was going on. So that was an interesting time.

*Q: So you were there from ... ?*

RICHARDSON: '59 to '61.

*Q: What was your job?*

RICHARDSON: I was the political section.

*Q: Who was the ambassador when you were there?*

RICHARDSON:Elbridge Durbrow.

*Q: You went back, he was an old China hand, wasn't he?*

RICHARDSON: No, no. He ... where would he have been before? I don't know, but I don't think he had had any previous experience in that area.

*Q: No, maybe not.*

RICHARDSON: And then he was soured by old things.

*Q: How, what was the situation in Vietnam when you arrived, we're talking about South Vietnam.*

RICHARDSON: Well, we were solidly in support of Ngo Dinh Diem.

*Q: Was there ...*

RICHARDSON: We were not yet, not yet disillusioned with him as happened later on in the Kennedy Administration.

*Q: Well, were they still talking about Diem being Arguit the Abonese Magsaysay, and all?*

RICHARDSON: Well, that, if no one ever said it in my presence, but certainly he was our man. He was Syngman Rhee. He was Magsaysay. He was our choice. After he was, what in a convent, or a monastery in the States when they anointed him.

*Q: What, where'd you live and how was life there?*

RICHARDSON: I lived in an apartment. The first place I had was a completely air conditioned apartment and it was dark. Then there was an opportunity to move to the top floor of a small apartment building that wasn't air conditioned at all but it was so bright and cheerful so my wife and I moved there and enjoyed it. Yes, we really enjoyed Vietnam. We traveled all over the country north of Saigon. One time, I put something like 2,000 miles on that car, on the Volkswagen and it's such a little country I can't figure out how I got that many miles on it. [Laughter]. And the people are hard working. They're cultured, I mean in terms of their own culture and of course they absorb the French culture and so for most and the food was ...

*Q: When you get French and Vietnamese food, you couldn't ask for two nicer cuisines.*

RICHARDSON: No, no. So we enjoyed that very much and it was a good time because as I said the French War was over and the American one had not begun.

*Q: Who was the head of the Political Section?*

RICHARDSON: Joe Mendenhall. I think later Ambassador in Madagascar, I think. I know that he went from Saigon to head up the AID mission to Laos, at a time when it was a very big operation.

*Q: What piece of the action were you given in the political section?*

RICHARDSON: You call “dog's body.” The one thing that I had that I did all the time was in North, was a weekly report on North Vietnam. Now, where did I get that information from? Very often I got it from people who'd been there. They had the international commission.

*Q: I see ...*

RICHARDSON: These are Canadians and Indians.

*Q: Yes, but Canadians, Indians and Polish.*

RICHARDSON: Well, the Poles, we didn't have much luck with them but the Indians and the Canadians, we were able to ...

*Q: And they traveled back and forth.*

RICHARDSON: And I would include stuff that I'd been given from the political section that they'd picked up, a lot from the agency people.

*Q: Well, how, was the CIA outfit the station, or a substantial station?*

RICHARDSON: Yes. I would say that in my 35 years service, the best relations that I've ever experienced in my time. When I arrived, Nick Natsios was the head of the office and he took me around his shop to meet his people and you know there were no new barriers. And he was followed by Bill Colby, later Agency director. My wife and Mrs. Colby still see each other. So there were excellent relationships between political and the agency. As a matter of fact, they even called on me once because they wanted some cover. They

wanted to make contact with a Pole and he played bridge so I invited him over to play bridge and the fourth was the guy who wanted to meet him. And when we left Saigon, Mrs. Colby gave a big tea for my wife. This produced a lot of question within the embassy, “Why is Mrs. Colby giving your wife a tea party?” Because they got along well, but it had nothing to do with Bill and me. Later, a few years later, sort of a happen stance, we traveled from Europe to the States on the same ship so we've had lots of contact, but if you go back to the professional part of it, I've never had or seen better and closer integration of effort and activity.

*Q: Well, what were you seeing up in North Vietnam at the time?*

RICHARDSON: Who were we seeing?

*Q: What were you seeing developments up there?*

RICHARDSON: There was activity in agriculture collectivization and efforts to keep people from fleeing south.

*Q: Did you have much contact with Vietnamese, South Vietnamese?*

RICHARDSON: Yes. Matter of fact, I'd go out one weekend, yes I had Vietnamese to my home all the time. Very often they'd turn up without their wives and a bunch of flowers, but still they came. And I'm glad our relations with French too, who are still there. There was this colonel who headed up the brewery there. 33 is the brand. Another was a doctor who lived right opposite the presidential palace. Oh, and there were French there with whom we had very good relations. One amusing thing, I don't know if you think, we just talk, I was at dinner one night and I met an absolutely charming Frenchmen, delightful fellow. And his name was Oquinel. It sounded like something that you eat. At the end of the evening, we exchanged cards. His name was Raymond O'Connell. His father or grandfather was some Irish adventurer who ended up in Indochina in the 19th century.

*Q: Well, did you get out and talk to the French on the plantations and all that?*

RICHARDSON: Yes, but we had a better informant for that. I did spend one weekend up with the French at a rubber plantation, but we had a secretary, Larry Pat Hughs who was up there every weekend.

*Q: Was the American presence sort of overpowering at that time or very small?*

RICHARDSON: No, but they were there. My guess is there were probably as many as 1,900 U.S. Military, but I can't speak with any exactness about the figure. This is the impression I have from that period, there may have been as many as 1,900. No combat units. It was definitely a highly desirable assignment for the Military at that time because this was the only war going on and they would come out to get their cards punched.

*Q: How about, were the French Military around?*

RICHARDSON: No, no. The French had even given up training the Vietnamese Army in 1954. They turned that over to the U.S. a couple of years earlier. When was Dien Bien Phu? 1954?

*Q: Ah, '54, I think.*

RICHARDSON: And so, in fact, I think in '56 they turned over responsibility for training the Vietnamese Army. to the U.S. so the French Military were there maybe only as attaches.

*Q: Did, how about, did you have many, much communication with the Chinese community and so on in other places?*

RICHARDSON: No, no.

*Q: How about ... ?*

RICHARDSON: With them, there would be mostly a language problem. I don't know how good their French was. So one night, I was astounded, when it was very late, 11:00 at night and some, for some reason I think it was, my wife and I in Chalon, eating, why we'd be eating that late, I don't know, but we got into conversation with the waiter who spoke very good English. And so we asked him some questions about that, and do you know where he learned his English? From a Chinese teacher of English. [Laughter]. His accent was good. But, that's as I say that's the only serious conversation I've ever had with a Chinese.

*Q: How about your days going down to the Delta and often times to the Highlands?*

RICHARDSON: Highlands, I would, North of Saigon we went everywhere up to the DMZ. That's where I had my Volkswagen bug.

*Q: You had what?*

RICHARDSON: My Volkswagen bug, the car.

*Q: Oh, yes.*

RICHARDSON: But the Delta was out.

*Q: Why was that?*

RICHARDSON: Because guerilla activities had picked up. When I first arrived, Tom Barnes and I talked about using public transportation and going down to the Camau Peninsula, to the Delta, to see the country, but we didn't. Before we could put that into operation, within 6 months there was so much guerrilla activity that we could never get permission to go down there so we ended up going North to go hiking in the Highlands. On another occasion I traveled to the North and back. Up along the coast and back through the highlands.

*Q: Do we have anything on Da Nang?*

RICHARDSON: You mean as a consulate?

*Q: No.*

RICHARDSON: No we had only Hue. Da Nang was military.

*Q: Was there any sort of North-South, I'm talking about difference within the political spectrum between North and South Vietnam and Southern-South Vietnam?*

RICHARDSON: Well, of course, you had the Northerners who had escaped from the North, but they had moved South and they were predominantly Catholic so you had a difference there. Both of geography and of religion. And you had more political opposition that probably came from Buddhists or types that didn't have any particular religious affiliation, but the government was not very tolerant of them, tolerant of opposition.

*Q: Yes. Were they having that battle, I can't remember, between I can't think of the name right now, it was sort of a sect, a religious sect?*

RICHARDSON: Bao Dai. Yes.

*Q: Yes.*

RICHARDSON: Yes, but there were guys who ran the whorehouse.

*Q: Yes, I mean ...*

RICHARDSON: That was a gang.

*Q: It was a gang essentially.*

RICHARDSON: Yes, well he squashed that before I arrived. What were they called, I've forgotten?

*Q: I'd say Wha Wha or something like that.*

RICHARDSON: Hwa Hao.

*Q: Hwa Hao, something like that.*

RICHARDSON: Yes, yes. No, that was, that gang, but there were two of them: Wha Hao was one, which we're calling Wha How and then there was another one, they were Hoods, I think. And they were operating the whore houses, they had that kind of activity and it was also a threat to law and order, but while I was there, there was an attempt by some army unit to overthrow the government and that was in November, I know it was November 11th because that's the Marine Corps birthday is. So it was November 11th, the night of the 11th/12th.

That coup attempt lasted the entire weekend. After the Marine Corps birthday reception Friday night, there was no ball due to security concerns. My wife and I went to an after-hours club where we fell in with a bunch of Canadians and Political Section secretary Mary Pat Hughes. We got home about 2:00 after dropping off Mary Pat. As I was putting the car in the garage, heavy gunfire broke out nearby with tracers passing over the house so thick it looked like a lighted path in the sky. Along the way I found Mary Pat on the street curious about what was going on. She jumped in with me confident that a secretary would be useful. And she was. Other than communicators and Marine guards we were the only staff at the embassy until Sunday afternoon. The ambassador had set up a command post at the residence where he was getting reports from our people on the street. He dictated cables to Mary Pat and I signed off for transmission. On Sunday afternoon a couple of us were going out to the top floor balcony when we stopped because of nearby gunfire. The fellow immediately in front of me spun around and was pressed against my chest. Just

then he caught a bullet in the back. He was other agency with a sense of humor. Reaching around to his wound he complained “someone has put a hole in my cloak.” He survived.

Mary Pat certainly deserved an award for her work, initiative, and devotion to the job, but I don't know if she ever got one.

*Q: I think November 10th, as I recall.*

RICHARDSON: Okay, that night. That would have been '60. Colby was already there so it must have been '60 because one of our junior officers, John Helble, distinguished himself by reporting by telephone from the balcony of the Colby house overlooking the presidential palace and was able to give the ambassador a blow by blow report. Well, have we talked long enough?

*Q: Well, no. I'm thinking in terms of, I want, I'd like to finish up the Saigon bit and then we can stop. How about, did we have much contact with say the Buddhists. I assume we had relatively good contact with the Catholics and all.*

RICHARDSON: With the Buddhists as Buddhists?

*Q: Yes.*

RICHARDSON: I don't know. I'm not aware of it in the political section, but I would, I think I have to assume that this would have been something the intelligence agencies would have been doing because the political section, the embassy as the embassy would have been very much concerned about alienating Diem by being seen to cultivate his enemy so I think that ... they would have to leave that to the intelligence people.

*Q: How about, did you run across the news, I was thinking Madame Ngu of course and her husband which was, who was it Tim's brother.*

RICHARDSON: No, I didn't. No, what's his name? Nhu.

*Q: Well, anyway ...*

RICHARDSON: Nhu.

*Q: Yes. Were they figures when you were there?*

RICHARDSON: Oh, very much so. We regarded Nhu as the principle advisor and confidante of his brother. The one person he trusted. And, remember, he had ambitions and evidently had real influence, this was the impression we had. She was a power to be reckoned with ... a very strong personality and she still is I think.

*Q: Yes. Well, were there any attacks on the embassy or ... ?*

RICHARDSON: No, but right after I left they blew up the embassy.

*Q: Yes the bomb went off right in front of it.*

RICHARDSON: Yes and there were, there was a bomb of sorts thrown over the wall at one of my colleagues, I think he was USAID. I don't think anybody was injured, but there was concern, but not, if, there wasn't so serious a situation that I couldn't get permission to drive all over the country except down South.

*Q: Well, then maybe this is a good place to stop?*

RICHARDSON: Except, do you want to finish Saigon?

*Q: Yes.*

RICHARDSON: LBJ was coming out as Vice President.

*Q: Well wait, he wouldn't have, he didn't come in until '61.*

RICHARDSON: As Vice President.

*Q: Yes, I mean Kennedy was elected in '60 and they came in '61 and you were still there?*

RICHARDSON: Yes.

*Q: You were there from '59 to '61.*

RICHARDSON: Yes, now so LBJ is coming. Of course this is a big deal so they get us all together and I had not had too high of an opinion of the Admin. Counselor, but when I saw how he organized this big deal that was coming up ... my esteem for him went up considerably. Well, my job was to organize a reception, guest list of about 600 people and by then I had left the political section, I was staff aid.

*Q: For Nolting?*

RICHARDSON: For Nolting.

*Q: Ambassador Nolting.*

RICHARDSON: Yes, yes. Durbrow had just left. He wouldn't let me leave until he left. So I get out a guest list and did what everyone has to do to organize a big affair and the morning of the affair, I boarded a ship going out to the South China Sea. [Laughter]. At 6:00 when the first guest was due to arrive, I was just clearing the river going past Vung Tau with tears in my eyes, into the South China Sea. So, it's the only time I'd really run away from my responsibility.

*Q: Yes, that's probably a good one to get away with. I think when the Kennedy's, Jack and Bobby, sent Lyndon Johnson out to get him out of town more than anything else.*

RICHARDSON: Yes. But I was very saddened to leave. I'd had such a good time, I had become so attached to the country that I literally stood in the stern of that ship as we went past Cape St. Jacques and tears were rolling down my face. I went back there just a

couple of years ago as a tourist and got to Hanoi which of course I couldn't have gotten to except as a prisoner in those days.

*Q: okay. We were able to, when did that bombing of that waterside restaurant, The Barge, did that happen while you were there.*

RICHARDSON: I don't think so. I don't remember, I think I would remember that. Oh, but one thing I do want to include on this note is for several years after I left, '61, I tried to get back to Saigon and I did until the number of troops in the country reached the figure of 100,000. Then I stopped asking to go back because it was no longer a Vietnamese War that I could support, it had become an American War which I could not personally support and so that- (end of tape)

*Q: In 1961 where did you go?*

RICHARDSON: I went back to West Africa. I went to Lagos, Nigeria.

*Q: Alright, we'll pick it up next time then. Did you say at one point you went hiking with your wife and what did you do?*

RICHARDSON: No, no this was with Tom Barnes.

*Q: Tom Barnes.*

RICHARDSON: Tom Barnes, when we decided, it was decided for us that we couldn't go through the Delta and the peninsula by public transportation as we had hoped because of the guerrilla activity so we went North into the Hill country and drove the Volkswagen up the footpath to a Montagnard village where we left the car, hired some people to carry our equipment, because we were going to be camping to the next village and we worked our way around the hills for about a week and made a circle and got back to the Volkswagen

and this was my only real contact with the people other than the lowland Vietnamese and they couldn't have been more gracious and accepting.

*Q: Did you get any feel for the division between the lowland Vietnamese and the Montagnards?*

RICHARDSON: Not when I was traveling there because we had a Vietnamese armed guard with us, but he was very, he was courteous and circumspect in his duties, but everything else we heard was that the lowlanders, the Vietnamese were contemptuous of the “primitives” in the hills. We found them gracious and very, very open. Now we're up in the hills and the streams there are pretty cold. When we would come to a stream, our porters would get a bar of soap and take off their clothes and jump into the water. [Laughter]. And so Tom and I got into the habit and we took off our clothes and jumped in after them which was just as well because that was the only occasion we had to bathe.

*Q: At that point had we put special forces in?*

RICHARDSON: No, no, no. We were talking. The embassy staff were working on the anti-insurgency plan. That was in development while I was there in my last 6 months or so and everybody was contributing to it actually. Hansbacker of USIA had an important input and everybody got a piece of that one. And that was the anti-insurgency plan which involved bringing the green berets in for medical assistance and things like that, to win the hearts and minds.

*Q: Okay, again we'll pick this up in 1961 when you're off to Lagos.*

RICHARDSON: Horrible. [Laughter].

***

*Q: Today is the 14th of August, 2003 and 1961 you're going to Nigeria. You were there from 1961 until when?*

RICHARDSON: Well, I was there just one year. But before we get into that, on reflection there's a couple of things we touched on when we last met, I think that could use some expansion.

*Q: Great.*

RICHARDSON: I remember you asking me what was my interest in joining the Foreign Service. You know I got home, I gave you a glib answer about them never having given me a 3-day pass when I was in Europe. Simply, that was an element. But there were other things, I can remember, in the 30's being aware that there was a world out there. My earliest international recollection as a child was the attack on the American gunboat Panaj in China.

*Q: About 1936 or something like that.*

RICHARDSON: Yes, well about the same time the Spanish Civil War broke out and I can remember being very interested in that. Actually, on occasion fantasizing about if I were enough to join the international brigade.

*Q: Oh, yes.*

RICHARDSON: So, I guess I was a pre-adolescent, premature anti-fascist in the 30's. But there was also a very important thing that happened when I was in college. I read a book called an American in India by a noted Negro historian named Saunders Redding. And that was probably the last thing that triggered me because I was attracted to the idea that here was somebody doing an interesting job; it was a record of his year in India as a Fulbright scholar.

*Q: It wouldn't have been a Fulbright, because Fulbright came later ...*

RICHARDSON: Yes, but that sort of thing. He was out there on a government grant in India. And he was somebody doing something interesting in an interesting situation, meeting interesting people as an American. At home, he would have been a Negro, period. Abroad he was an American and that intrigued me and certainly that was an element in attracting me to the Foreign Service. Many years later in West Africa, I met Doctor Redding and was able to tell him that he was responsible for where I was.

*Q: How interesting.*

RICHARDSON: At that point, I was in Nigeria and I wasn't very happy about being in Nigeria so the total irony was I could have told him “It's your fault that I'm here.”

*Q: Something like you son of a bitch. [Laughter].*

RICHARDSON: No, no. I was really grateful and delighted that I had the opportunity to meet him. The other thing that I wanted to bring up was I remember making a remark that I have always, mostly, lived my life in a racially integrated environment, but we have talked about my parents. That was just a small part of the world. The danger of beating the subject to death, but I think I ought to expand it beyond, sincerely beyond my immediate parent, my immediate family. There was my mother's brother, Walter who was English, born in American soil. He was married twice. He was married the first time to a Cuban woman of color by whom he had two daughters. Oh, incidentally the Cuban's father was a Syrian. His two daughters, my cousin's, each of them married three times. For each of them, one of the three husbands was white. One was a doctor and the other was a wholesale butcher. On the other side of the family, my father's brother, Godfrey, his daughter, Betty, had three children. Betty was married to a man whose father was an English doctor married to a Trinidadian woman of color. He and my cousin Betty had three children. One, the son married the white daughter of a congregational minister in New

England, I forget where, Connecticut or Massachusetts. The other daughter is married to a Jewish fellow of Russian background. And my uncle Walter on my mother's side was married twice. The first wife was a Cuban woman of color. His second wife was a Jewish woman of Russian ancestry, totally removed from the other two sides of the family, but a typical New York experience. Walter and his second wife had one child, a boy who was raised as an Episcopalian and he married a girl from an Italian family in Connecticut. And I think, I think that covers it. The only thing is I'll expect to be in Prague in a few weeks and I'm looking forward to seeing Betty's son there, where he's been working for an American firm. And that catches me up on two things that I wasn't very interested in dwelling on, race and my family, but I thought since it came up I would expand it.

*Q: Oh, I think it's very interesting. Also, too, I think you're reflecting the Caribbean culture which was much more from what I gather was less caught up in mixing or not mixing or anything else and also people who came out of, I mean you know we have the example right now of our Secretary of State, Colin Powell who seem to come out with much more confidence and those who sort of rose in the ranks with, were native born Americans.*

RICHARDSON: So this might really be more of interest to a sociologist or a social psychologist than a Foreign Affairs narrative. Okay. So I got rid of that and we were talking about Lagos.

*Q: Yes, you were there for a year, about a year '61 to '62.*

RICHARDSON: '61 to '62, yes.

*Q: What were you doing there?*

RICHARDSON: I went there as the Ambassador staff aide. Oh, wait, how did I get to Lagos? While I was in Saigon, which obviously I enjoyed hugely, they called for volunteers for the posts that they were opening up in Africa. This was ... I think '60 was the big independence and there was our original plan, what I understand talking to people who

have come out from State, was to have embassy in Abidjan and Dakar covering the hinter lands, but we suddenly became interested in accumulating UN votes to keep China out and so we started opening up in all these obscure places and they called for volunteers. So I volunteered, expecting to go to one of the former French territories in the interior of Equatorial Africa or West Africa. They sent me instead to Lagos. That was a bit of a disappointment because I had just come out of two French colonial posts and I figured another was natural. So that was a disappointment but the job was Staff Aide and there wasn't a hell of a lot to do as staff aide. So as I was also, getting to the political section, which at that moment didn't have a heck of a lot to do either, it was just the first year after independence and Joe Bennett was covering it very well.

*Q: Who was the ambassador?*

RICHARDSON: He went on later to be the Assistant Secretary for Africa. Who?

*Q: We'll pick this up later.*

RICHARDSON: Gosh, I remember Joe Palmer. I went to his funeral or I guess his memorial service several years ago. Oh, and then I doubled when the Consular Officer wasn't there. And it was the only of my 11 or 12 posts that I ever curtailed. There is a story in that, too, later on. I was disappointed, it wasn't a post I enjoyed.

*Q: Well, what was Nigeria like when you were there?*

RICHARDSON: Well, it was the first year after independence, '61. There were still officers in the bush, they had not become completely Nigerianized. I think I would like it even less today than I did then. The traffic was horrendous. The islands that constitute much of Lagos, because it's an island. Lagos island was joined to the mainland with one bridge, Carter Bridge. I didn't enjoy it. I didn't like it and I didn't particularly care for the people. They're pushy, which probably reflects my being American, Americans are pushy too. And there was a conflict, they weren't as accommodating as some other cultures are. Well,

let me jump ahead 30 years, I retired in end of June 1991. In September a phone call comes to the house. I'm not home. My wife answers the phone. And it's CEA/EX asking if Mr. Richardson would be interested in going on TDY to Lagos. [Laughter]. It had my wife rolling on the floor with laughter. I went because I was interested in seeing how the place had changed, would have changed in all those years, since the oil money came in. The biggest change was that there were now 3 bridges connecting the islands to the mainland and the traffic was worse than ever.

*Q: The political section, the ambassador are really... There really wasn't much of a political movement at the time. Was it more that people were getting ready, just sorting out things?*

RICHARDSON: The people who had been the notable politicals in the last years of the colonial eras, like Mamadou Bello, the Global Voice of the North, were in charge. There hadn't been yet the military coup when I left, but it did not wait very long. There were no disturbances, there was no public demonstrations and street crime was not a problem.

*Q: What about social life?*

RICHARDSON: Oh, active social life both with Nigerian and the international community. To go back to this question of street crime because I was conscious of the difference having returned what 30 years later, '61-'91. We did things like an Englishman and I made a home movie and we needed a boat for it and there was a stranded fishing boat on a beach by Badugery near the Dahomey boarder. With our wives, we didn't hesitate to go out there and sleep on the beach at night so we would have a full day of sunlight the next day. That would be unthinkable today. After parties a couple of times, we went out, a few of us went out to the beach in Lagos to watch the sun come up. Unthinkable today.

*Q: Well, then. When you curtail. What do they do to you?*

RICHARDSON: I mean I didn't say I'm not going back. See I was interested in getting an assignment back to a French area. I should tell you why I was able to do this. I went on

direct transfer from Saigon to Lagos and orders said do not pass by the United States, do not take leave. I'd been in Saigon almost two years. I was staff aid to the Ambassador those last 9 or 10 months, working 7 days a week. Wound up working even more those last weeks, sending off one ambassador, breaking in the new ambassador's aide, and organizing the reception for the Vice President. I was tired and Ambassador Durbrow suggested, “Since you won't take leave en route, why don't you sail to Lagos by ship?” So I went on the S.S. Cambodge from Saigon to Marseilles, three weeks. That was the best leave I've ever had of my life. I arrived in France refreshed. I left my wife behind in Saigon. She was flying, paralleling my trip, but sightseeing. The agency had said there was no room and I would have to share the cabin. Well, I ended up not having to share the cabin, but anyway she was content to parallel. So I was in Marseilles, full of energy, refreshed, relaxed, let's go let's do things, I said. My wife had gotten deadly ill in India and she was all washed out so our conditions were just the reverse of what they had been when I kissed her good-bye in Saigon.

Okay, so having gone to Lagos on a direct transfer, I was eligible for home leave after a year. I came back here to Washington and I went around trying to promote an assignment in the Maghreb, that is to say Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco. I was particularly keen on Algeria because flying one night out of Kano, Nigeria. We went across the Sahara and passed over Algiers in the dark, and its great harbor. There are roads around the lights like three strings of pearls, that's what they look like, the lights, the streetlights around the harbor. I fell in love with the place from 10,000 feet up. [Laughter]. And I wanted to get there. Well, PER remembered that I was interested in it. So I was home, at my in-laws and the phone rings and Jeff Frederick is on the phone and he said Cy, we remembered that you wanted a French-speaking post. Well, I hadn't asked for a French-speaking post, I asked for something in the Maghreb. Well, he had conveniently forgot that and he said so I think you'll be pleased to know you don't have to go back to Lagos, you're going to Niamey, which was not the Maghreb. Okay so I had shipped my Volkswagen from Saigon

to Lagos and had driven it there for a year. I went back to Lagos, got in my car, and drove to Niamey.

*Q: Niamey being the capital of ... ?*

RICHARDSON: Niger.

*Q: Niger.*

RICHARDSON: Nigeria's northern neighbor. Do you want to hear about Niger?

*Q: Oh, absolutely! You were probably in Niger from '62 to ...*

RICHARDSON: '65.

*Q: Three years.*

RICHARDSON: Well, it would have been late '62 to March of '65.

*Q: Okay, 2 and ? years.*

RICHARDSON: Yes. Yes, I had been in Dakar which is on the edge of the Sahara, but still you can get some green. You have to drive out of town to get to the desert. I'd been in Lagos, I'd been in Saigon, these are, you know, lush with green. They are moist and green and lush. I drive in from Lagos and the country is getting drier and drier as I go in and then I arrive in Niamey and I had never seen anything as dry as that in my life, having no familiarity with the American Southwest. I went into a deep funk and my wife who had been there several years before when she traveled with my secretary was exclaiming: “Wow, hey, this has changed. It certainly looks a lot better than it did when I was here before!” And I'm thinking what is this woman talking about, I've never seen anything so ghastly in my life. Well, I was in a deep funk for three days, literally, then I threw it off and made more friends there than at any of my posts except maybe Paris and Saigon. What

I did there, I think I was called the FSO general, I did everything. I was the only junior officer.

*Q: Well, do you remember who the ambassador was?*

RICHARDSON: Yes. The last one was, I'll work backwards, the last one was Robert Ryan, who had been Admin. Counselor in Paris. And his predecessor was a noted, by this time I guess we were African-American, Academic, named Mercer Cook, who later was ambassador in Senegal, so those were my ambassadors.

*Q: Well now, what was the sort of the political situation, economic situation in Niger?*

RICHARDSON: Well there really wasn't much. Exports to the United States consisted of a small quantity of very fine goatskin so my commercial work was not very heavy. There was one party and on the political side the guys who the French had been bringing along during the last years of the colonial period, they were in position and the French were there as their advisors so they simply switched roles, switched offices. Now the French were still very important and very jealous of their position and viewed us, so I thought in Niger than when I was in Dakar, with less suspicion of our intentions because I think we'd made it clear by that time that we were quite content in letting them run the show. We weren't interested in taking over their empire. So there was a more relaxed atmosphere.

But they were still covering the gap in the budget and still had advisors at every minister's elbow. I'll give you an instance: I, this is also sociological. My wife and I were at the swimming pool which was operated by the French Army as was the hospital. There was a Colonel Bremer who was in charge of the hospital. One day, across the pool, I could see a Frenchwoman with her two children, who obviously had an African father. There were a whole bunch of Frenchwomen and their children on that side, but it was as if there was a “cordon sanitaire” around this woman. No one was talking to her, they were nattering

among themselves but no one talked to this woman, and no one came any closer than like the wall there ...

*Q: About 3 or 4 feet.*

RICHARDSON: Yes, so this “cordon sanitaire” around her and none of the children were playing with her children. I got a little annoyed at that and said to my wife, “Why don't you go over and talk to her? No one is talking to her.” So my wife went in the water, came out on the other side and said a couple of words to her and the woman looked so happy to have somebody talk to her and in no time at all the children were climbing all over my wife's lap. Well, it turned out this woman was a neighbor on the next street and her husband was in the Office of the Budget, which was fine because for some reason that year I was responsible for reporting on the budget, so we became friends. We exchanged dinners, you know. And I told him I was interested ithe budget so he took me in one day to meet the “Director of the Budget Nationale” who didn't have a clue as to what the budget was all about. You know, I chatted with him for a little while and I said, “I see, I see.” He says, it's all here. It's all in the budget, it couldn't be more clear. I explained this to my friend and he says “I bet you need a little more information.” My friend, this man whose wife, my wife had befriended.

*Q: You say your friend took you down...*

RICHARDSON: Yes he took me down the hall to this cubbyhole where this little Frenchman was sitting who could tell me everything about the budget. So the French were still very, very strong there. I went through 180 degrees. I went from being in the pit of despair the first three days, thinking they must hate me in Washington to positively enjoying the place. And it was, you want me to tell war stories. One of the nicest things that happened to me was a day I spent with the African pharmacist, the name will come to me, it isn't important. He was Dahomian originally and he told me his life story or his story as a boy, and it was, not word for word, but an absolute parallel to this book I had read

called “L'Enfant Noir,” about the author, who also came out of a remote village, but he was a bright young boy and somebody recognized that he was bright and saw that he went to school and the big thing was that when he left the schooling that was available to him in his area, he traveled to the capital, to Dakar, to go to high school. Well, this Dahomian, that was the story of his life, too, and the trepidation with which he was leaving the village to go to the big city. That was a thrilling story and he also had an absolutely beautiful daughter.

*Q: Well, then did you get any official visits from anybody while you were there?*

RICHARDSON: Yes, official, we, I know we had an inspection, but not Congress, I don't think congress had yet discovered Niger. But, if I can back up I did have a notable visitor, I was control officer for Vice President Gore's father when he came to Lagos.

*Q: Senator Gore of Tennessee.*

RICHARDSON: Yes, yes.

*Q: Albert Gore.*

RICHARDSON: Albert Gore. He was a very pleasant, very undemanding gentlemen. He came through for a very short time. So we, I don't remember any notable visitors in Niger.

*Q: Was there any reflection of the problems that were beginning to develop in Algeria? How far along the independence movement had gotten in Algeria?*

RICHARDSON: Well, that was past. When I left Niger, I went out of Africa by way of Algeria, driving to Algiers, and this would have been in the first year after independence, so they must have gotten independence in late '63 or '64.

*Q: Yes, I wasn't sure.*

RICHARDSON: Yes. So, things were fairly tranquil in Algiers, in fact, very tranquil.

*Q: Did, in Niger, was there a tribal situation, so many you know the North is more Muslim and the South, course Niger is right in ...*

RICHARDSON: Well, Niger is all Muslim so its, your Peule, Fulani, and other divisions like that, but there's nothing divided on religious grounds. There were all Muslims. Diore was the president. He had represented Niger in the colonial legislature before independence. Diore used to come to Dakar regularly. So they all inherited their positions with independence.

*Q: Did you have much chance to travel around?*

RICHARDSON: There?

*Q: Yes.*

RICHARDSON: Oh, yes. Peace Corps had come in several years before. And you had the people crossing the Sahara going south. This is where they would come out, in Niamey. I met a number of them ... adventurers.

*Q: But, what was the town or city of Niamey like?*

RICHARDSON: Oh, when I would drive my wife to shop on a Saturday morning, I always thought that Tombstone, Arizona must have looked like this in about 1890. And I had the feeling that I should be tying up a horse rather than parking a Volkswagen. My butcher literally had the false front that you see in the Western movies. That was my butcher shop. So there should have been a hitching post.

*Q: [Laughter]. Did you find that there were, how about social life? Was there much mixing?*

RICHARDSON: Not so much with the Nigerians because they were much more reserved, not hostile, not hostile. But, they did not live the way the Europeans and the Americans did. By that time we had air conditioning and things like that. But there were African diplomats from other countries. One of the most amusing and delightful people I knew then was a Malian who was there as a representative of some UN organization. He was very Westernized and I marveled at his sense of humor. Then there was the Charg# d'Affaires of Nigeria, very charming young man. So we had those kinds of ... And who else was there? ... Many Israelis were there, very good.

*Q: How about the Soviets, were they doing anything?*

RICHARDSON: Yes, we used to play volleyball with them, and I'm trying to remember where we used to play volleyball with the Soviets. I remember playing volleyball with the Israelis. I don't think, the Soviets weren't represented there, no. Egyptians were there. The Egyptian Ambassador lived in Lagos, but he came up very frequently. I would have him to dinner when he came up. You know, I'm trying to remember because there was a question, where we would play volleyball with the Soviets. It was with the Lebanese compound.

*Q: Yes. [Laughter]. Ah, well you were at 12 posts ...*

RICHARDSON: Something like that 11 or 12 posts.

*Q: Well, you left Niger when?*

RICHARDSON: In March, early March 1965, yes.

*Q: And then what did they do with you?*

RICHARDSON: Oh, I was assigned to Paris which was great. I went around telling the French, “I'm going home. I'm going home.” [Laughter]. Well, after so many years of

learning French in the boonies, it was like going home because many of the people I had met along the way, when they came home, came to Paris so I got to see them and continue the relationship.

*Q: Well, you were in Paris from '65 to when?*

RICHARDSON: '68.

*Q: '68, what were you doing?*

RICHARDSON: I was, that was my first full-time Consular job, I worked exclusively in American services for three years. And that was a very satisfactory ...

*Q: What did the American services consist of in those days?*

RICHARDSON: Well, I guess it's kind of, anything pertaining to the welfare and protection of American citizens as well as citizenship and notarials. There were all kinds of situations where their welfare is in jeopardy.

*Q: Oh, yes.*

RICHARDSON: Yes.

*Q: Well, tell me about how, do you have any good counselor stories.*

RICHARDSON: [Laughter]. Yes, I don't know, do you want to hear how I got to Paris?

*Q: Sure.*

RICHARDSON: Because that takes some doing. In fact, I don't know if it has a place here, it was the single greatest adventure of my 35-year career.

*Q: Sure.*

RICHARDSON: Well, in my second year or sometime in my first year in Niamey, I had hepatitis. And, so you get desperately ill, you lose weight. So I recovered and went back to work, but after a year I was very tired ... really fatigued. And, there was no question I was going to go somewhere to rest. But the idea of going to Europe or the Mediterranean to sit in a resort didn't interest me much. Somebody mentioned that there were passenger-freight ships that go down the coast, turn around at Pointe Noire and go back up the coast. That would be a week, 10 days trip. That was perfect. So I did that. It was on a ship called the Jean Mermoz, the famous flyer. Okay, so I take the trip, because my liver was tired. Of course, I'm on a French ship, they served wine twice a day [Laughter] and good food. So, I came back, stopped off to visit some bachelor friends in Cotonou and I returned to Niamey, not at all refreshed. I checked back into the hospital [Laughter] where I stayed for the better part of a week. On the ship, they had printed menu cards, lunch and dinner and when I had something, a new dish, that I particularly enjoyed, I saved the card, checking the item on the menu and presented these cards to my wife when we got to Paris. Well, she worked her way through all of those cards. And the last dish was something called poulet chaud froid, which is an elegant chicken dish covered in aspic with truffle diamonds.

*Q: Oh, boy.*

RICHARDSON: She hasn't forgiven me for this to this day. Well, she said to me the day before we were having guests over, “You know, this dish is a hell of a lot of work. What should I do for a first course?” I reminded her that a friend had come back from Russia and had brought us a tin of caviar, I think like 500 grams of caviar. It was big. And I said so why don't you put out the caviar and we'll nibble on that and since that probably won't be enough, get a side of smoked salmon. So everything came together, it was very elegant, very nice. And the guests enjoyed it. But, when she cleared away the remains of the caviar and the smoked salmon and brought her hard work, her poulet chaud froid, they groaned. They'd eaten so much caviar and smoked salmon. [Laughter].

*Q: Oh, [Laughter].*

RICHARDSON: To this day she has not forgiven me. She reminds me, “I can still hear those groans.” Well, go back to the, so this was on the recipes from the Jean Mermoz. Well, having recalled the lovely time I had the Mermoz, I had gotten a passage on the Cambodge to take us from Dakar to Marseilles. In Marseilles I was going to catch the Constitution or the Independence to go to New York. Well, in discussing the Paris assignment with my wife, I happened to break out a map and she looked at me and said, “Look, there's Paris. Paris is just straight north from Niamey, why don't we drive there?” I said No. I had my heart set on this ship which I knew from an earlier trip. I said, “Don't be absurd. We can't do that.” And I went to bed. Well, during the night, I was tossing around at 2:00, I woke up and thinking about this, I said to myself, you know, this woman has gone through a lot including gunfire, she's lived in all of these hell holes, and never asked for so much as a lace handkerchief. If she wants to drive across the Sahara, we'll do it. So I got up the next morning and she was making breakfast and I said we're going to do it. We're going to do what? I said, we're going to drive north out of Niamey. And we did. It was our greatest adventure. It took me several weeks to do it, but we left Niamey and came out in Algiers.

*Q: Was there a road or what?*

RICHARDSON: There was a trail in the sand. It consisted of the tracks of vehicles that had crossed earlier in the year

*Q: A trail.*

RICHARDSON: A trail, yes. You don't pick up a road, paved road until you're well, well into Algiers. I forget what town.

*Q: Are there places to get gas and ... ?*

RICHARDSON: No, not for 700 kilometers between Agadesin, Niger and Tamanrassat in southern Algeria. We had to carry our gas. During the French time, there was a place right on the border between the two territories where the French did truck in gas, a considerable effort because they're bringing it over hundreds of miles where there's no roads. So it must have cost a fortune. Anyway, by the time I got there, there was no town there and there were just two pumps like the legs of those of Ozymandias. I think I photographed them.

*Q: Well, this Volkswagen didn't use up a lot of gas as ... ?*

RICHARDSON: No, but you can't weigh down the vehicle with gas and water and so forth because then you'd never get out of the sand so what you do, is you find a truck that's going that way, because there is commerce, there is commerce. I got together with a man who was transporting dried tomatoes, sun dried tomatoes, to northern Algeria and he carried my excess baggage, clothing, suitcases, and my extra gasoline, etc. I just filled up the tank and gave the other stuff to him. The one thing I carried was a goatskin of water. I was going to rendezvous with him every evening and then I could fill my gas tank and we always tried to rendezvous at a well to fill the water skins. After Tamanrassat, the places are close enough together that we can go without the truck. But, for that section, whicmust be 400 miles, 300 kilometers or so, there is no gas. But, the striking thing about that trip and this is what pains me so much when I read what the Algerians were doing to each other and to foreigners, like the Italian priest killed several years ago is that out there people were really helpful to each other. We encountered numerous instances of human solidarity. You take too long to get out of the sand, and somebody would come clomping up on a camel to see if they could help. We didn't want any help because my wife and I had worked out the routine so that if we got stuck in the sand, we could be out in 25 minutes if nobody turns up to help us. If someone turns up to help us, it takes twice as long.

*Q: Yes. Well, I take it you weren't upset by Bedouin or something like that?*

RICHARDSON: As I said, I found so many instances of human solidarity. The first day, we drove about 100 kilometers until we stopped at the well where the truck driver had said, “I will meet you tomorrow.” Well, he didn't turn up for three days. Where did we sleep? We just slept out, put things on the sand and slept on the ground. I did have a camp bed for my wife, and a bed for myself. Well, in the morning, there was this little Arab who observed us and came to the conclusion that these were two greenhorns that he better take in hand or they're not going to survive out there. So he came over, little guy and our common language was French, of which he spoke a little, enough though. He asked me, “Do you have rope?” And I said, “Yes, I had rope.” “Do you have a blanket,” I said yes, I have a blanket. I was curious, why is he asking me this? He said, “Show me, show me.” So I showed him and he showed me how to make a shelter against the sun, which I would never have had a clue. There was the remains of a small mud house and he showed me how to use that broken down wall and my car and create a shelter.

*Q: [Laughter].*

RICHARDSON: Yes. And my wife said to him in the second day that the truck did not show up and she expressed concern that, you know, I don't know how long it's going to take him to get here, I wonder if our food will last. Our food consisted of cans of sardines in tomato sauce. To this day I can't eat it. Well, he's got nothing, he's camping by the side of the road waiting for his son to show up. I don't know why he was there but he was waiting for his son to turn up with a camel or something. He comes over and brings my wife some of the couscous that he had and offers it to her. And this is just the first illustration of this human solidarity I found out there in the desert.

Another instance, I think it was in In Salah. We arrived in this place and I'm out of money, I'm out of local Algerian money. But we want to eat so I go to this place and I order. I had French money and I had Moroccan money and I have dollars, so I'm not worried. So I go to this little restaurant in this town and this is still the Sahara, you've got towns in it and I ordered a simple meal. Maybe the whole thing came to a dollar and a half for the two of

us and I tried to pay him with foreign currency and he won't have any of it. No, he said I won't have anything to do with foreign money, you come back and pay me when you get dirham, if that's the currency. And, so okay, so I'm leaving after lunch and he comes after me as I'm going out the door and in his double negative he says and “Do not, not come back because you do not have money.”

*Q: Ah, oh, boy.*

RICHARDSON: But, and there were all kinds of instances like that. I don't know how much of this you want to hear because there were just a whole host of adventures. One day, this was right in the middle of the desert, my battery is no longer charging, I can tell the warning light has come on. But it turned it was the bearing, the generator had worn out and it wasn't charging the battery while the engine was running so I had to keep the engine running. Well, I'm also into a sand storm and just as I'm kind of despairing, I got two things wrong: If I stopped the car, I probably won't be able to get it started again, or may not be able to. I'll be draining the battery. Two, I am in a sand storm. Well, like an unbelievable mirage, I suddenly find myself on a black top road, an asphalt road. This is weird. So what do I do, I turn left, I was about to cross it, I turn left because that was still the direction, roughly the direction I wanted to go and I follow it and eventually I come to a building and I go in and what is it? A bunch of French soldiers. There, that was the area where the French, special weapons testing was conducted down that road.

*Q: Oh, yes.*

RICHARDSON: Well, the soldiers, they said you can't stay here. I said but what are we going to do. They said stay on the paved road and several kilometers down you're going to find a post of the gendarmerie. And they will let you stay, and they did. We went down there, the gendarmes had no problem at all giving us refuge from the sand storm and they greeted me with a bottle of red wine and a big loaf of bread and gave me a room.

*Q: You know, I find it incredible that going across the Sahara, one of our Foreign Service officers went with his wife, he died, do you remember that?*

RICHARDSON: No.

*Q: She had to bring his body out.*

RICHARDSON: Yes. I can believe it. But, I don't remember hearing that story. Well, I did this 30 years ago.

*Q: Well, that was..*

RICHARDSON: Maybe that's more recent.

*Q: No, not really because I knew Russell something or other, last name is Russell. Anyway ...*

RICHARDSON: Well there are routes that are more difficult than the one I took.

*Q: Yes.*

RICHARDSON: Well, the station, the refuge with the French police for a couple of days. And other travelers came in and before we were done, we got up a table of bridge. In Northern Algeria we recovered our baggage from the truck driver and continued on to Casablanca where we took a plane home for leave.

*Q: Yes. [Laughter]. Well, finally you get yourself to France.*

RICHARDSON: Yes.

*Q: To Paris. What are you doing there?*

RICHARDSON: I'm doing welfare and protection of which about, almost half of it was exclusively in death and estates. Let's see, yes, I would guess I did Death and Estates for about 14 months.

*Q: Well an awful lot of American expatriates and tourists would come there and die.*

RICHARDSON: Yes, well, the resident expatriates were no problem. If they're working for a company, the company looks after them. It's the tourists and the walking wounded, some of whose families pay them to stay out of the U.S.

*Q: Remittance men. Yes.*

RICHARDSON: Yes. Because they're too much trouble, it's less of a strain for the family to have them abroad than home.

*Q: Yes.*

RICHARDSON: But all kinds of misfortunes can befall a person. If you give me a couple of million Americans going through, you're going to get all kinds of problems. So it was a very active and interesting time.

*Q: Oh, yes. I'm sure it was.*

RICHARDSON: And very satisfying.

*Q: How about people who were in trouble with the police? How did the French police treat them?*

RICHARDSON: Correctly, correctly. I never had any instance where the, where people would claim that they were abused. The women were looked after in institutions where there were nuns. And the men were in ordinary prisons. Maybe the food wasn't very good, you wouldn't expect it to be. But I had no complaints about physical or even mental abuse.

*Q: You were there from '65 to '68, which was sort of the beginning of the era of the college students who went off and had their wanderjahr or vacations and drugs and you know hashish and all were just coming in ...*

RICHARDSON: Yes, if they were in France they were only transiting on their way to India and Nepal. I saw much more of them when I got to South America. That was the regular trek for them going down the spine of South America. There weren't any great problems in Paris. Drugs, there were. Mostly marijuana, I had some musicians who were picked up for marijuana and we had an active anti-drug outfit in the embassy. One of the several predecessors of the current DEA.

*Q: Who was the consul general when you were there?*

RICHARDSON: Perry Cully.

*Q: Perry Cully was a social animal, wasn't he?*

RICHARDSON: Yes, yes. He didn't have much to do with consular work.

*Q: Yes, I was going to say, I suspected that. He was, he inspected me in Belgrade ...*

RICHARDSON: In what year did you go?

*Q: Oh, about '63 or something like that ...*

RICHARDSON: Well, that's how he got to Paris, when he was an inspector he'd seen the home occupied by the consul general in Paris and he says “that's for me.”

*Q: Also he got there and he never left, I guess.*

RICHARDSON: He didn't. He divorced Mrs. Cully and married an English nurse at the American hospital, so he may still be there.

*Q: I don't know. How did you find social life there at the time?*

RICHARDSON: Fine, fine. I was comfortable. Well, that wasn't nearly as important, the social life, I had French friends coming in from the colonies so I didn't make many, yes there were a couple of lawyers, people I had met on business that I'd have to dinner or have a drink with. I became friendly with a man in one of their intelligence services and we used to meet for coffee and drinks until he told me that he'd been instructed by his superiors to break off our relationship. Either they thought I was trying to penetrate them or they decided I wasn't worth cultivating. [Laughter]. I like to think it was the latter, not the former. [Laughter]. And there was a good bunch of Americans both in the embassy and among the expats. I recently did a WAE TDY in Haiti and the woman I was working for there is the daughter of somebody who was in the ambassador's office when I was there. Barrett was staff aide. Social relations were no problem. The real big thing for me there was not the social but the cultural life. I'd been in the boondocks, at this point, for nine years. The only music and opera I had seen was Chinese opera in Saigon and a German string orchestra. They brought out a string orchestra and that was it. For 9 years I had depended on recorded music and it was great. And movies, because Paris is a great town for films.

*Q: Oh, yes.*

RICHARDSON: So we went to the theater, we went to concerts, we went to all kinds of things of that sort only three weeks of the month because one week every four weeks I was duty officer in the Welfare and Protection Section. It was so active you didn't have one consular duty officer. Passports, Welfare and Protection, and Visas each had it's own and that was busy.

*Q: How about when people came and they were in trouble and the place didn't have a consular post or something? In some distance, did you have trouble with that?*

RICHARDSON: Well, the police were good about notifying us when people ended up in hospitals, automobile accidents miles away. If it was within reasonable distance, we'd go see them. We didn't have any problem and we had so many of them that managed to get into difficulty in Paris or in the immediate environs of Paris ...

*Q: Yes, if you're going to get in trouble ...*

RICHARDSON: And we had a lot of consulates in France. At this time we have none except Strasbourg today. But in those days we had Lyon, Strasbourg, Bordeaux, and Nice, so the country was well covered. I don't know what they would do now. But you were asking me about the kinds of trouble people get into. Well, my first day, I had just set up shop in Paris, in Welfare and Protection and this was in the days before everybody ended up in cubby holes. I had a proper office with a window and a beautiful tree outside the window in the garden. One of the clerks came in saying there's an American gentlemen outside who's very anxious to speak to somebody, to speak to an officer. So I said, send him in. My first client!

So he comes in, a well set up, trim waisted man in his upper thirties, early forties. Neat double-breasted blue gray suit. Obviously agitated, he opened this conversation with me with “I got no satisfaction from that woman. I got no satisfaction from the police, but I damn well mean to get satisfaction from the American Embassy.” And that was his opener! So I said: Fine, fine, have a seat, sit down. What was his story? He had hired a “lady of the evening” the night before, had been unable to perform and had asked for a refund. [Laughter]. Of course she did not oblige him, so in high dungeon or whatever, he goes to the local police station about 2:00 in the morning and complains to the night sergeant. The night sergeant listens very sympathetically and says ah, Monsieur, that is really abominable. I'm going to ask my colleagues to come out and hear what the terrible things that happen to tourists in our glorious city of Paris. He goes in, wakes up the night crew and the emergency staff, and brings them to hear the story. He comes up and says Monsieur, tell my colleagues the terrible things that have happened to you. He tells the

story and they all burst into laughter. So he is very T'd off when he comes to see me. What am I going to do? This is my first client in Paris. It was never so amusing again.

*Q: Well, what did you do?*

RICHARDSON: I let him talk himself out. He wanted someone to listen to him and not laugh. I was able to do that. [Laughter]. I was the first person who was able to hear his story and not laugh. And that's the satisfaction he got. He had said he meant to get satisfaction from the American Embassy. And that was the beginning. There were all kinds of foolish things, but lot of real tragedies, too. Now, one, Texas. There's a city in Texas called Paris.

*Q: Yes.*

RICHARDSON: I'm in Paris. There is a group of high school students, now it wasn't for lack of adult supervision, there were maybe 14 students. I think they had four adults with them. That, I would say was good coverage. They are in one of these hotels with the old fashioned caged elevators.

*Q: Yes.*

RICHARDSON: And this kid from Paris, Texas wants to know, where's the elevator? You know he's rung the bell and it's not there so he looks over the wall of the cage at the very moment the elevator descends. It decapitates him.

*Q: Oh, how awful.*

RICHARDSON: And I have to inform his grandfather. I think the boy was an orphan. I had to call his grandfather in Paris, Texas. No, I didn't have to call him. The grandfather called me. First I went down to the station house, where I interpreted for the police and the guardians. The kids were wiped out, desolated. And then, my time 2:00, they notified the

grandfather, then the grandfather called me from Paris, Texas to discuss arrangements for shipping the body in and so forth.

*Q: Yes.*

RICHARDSON: I got no more sleep that night.

*Q: Oh, yes. That's one of the awful things that happened. At that time, particularly in Paris, the French had the reputation, it's changed quite a bit, but had the reputation for being rather abrupt and not very pleasant to deal with, with Americans or foreigners...*

RICHARDSON: Well, I'll tell you about that because I certainly had lots of experience with the Parisians. Metropolitan French I would know best. I'll tell you, my wife encountered any number of tourists complaining about the French being rude and brusque and her standard line was: “Stand still for a minute and observe the way they treat each other; it's not anti-American. That's the Parisian. He is impatient. He has little tolerance for even his own kind and God help you if you don't speak French. You're just so much worse off.” But there were times when there was, particularly amongst the intellectuals, strong feelings against things that represent American values. They'd call it the Coca-Colazation of France and of Europe, but at that time, the government, because we had supported them in Indochina and Africa, or they needed us, the government to government relations were fine, but the relations further down the line were lousy. At one event in Normandy where I represented the embassy, I was heartily booed by the crowd over the Vietnam War.

*Q: You were there during the May and June of '68, I guess.*

RICHARDSON: Yes. They had the general strike.

*Q: Yes. I mean this is very exciting. How, what were you observing in this?*

RICHARDSON: I was observing a degree of courtesy and cooperation among the Parisians that I had not encountered before. I saw people with gasoline stopping their

autos and taking on people walking. I don't know if they took money. I know I got into the habit and I would offer people a ride if they were going my way. I'd offer them rides and sometimes somebody would offer to give me a few frames and I would say, “No, no. Let's go have a coffee or buy me a beer or something like that.” One day, there was a woman with a cane, because I think she had difficulties with a prosthetic device. I think that was one of her legs. She was walking with difficulty up a hill in Montmartre and I pulled up to ask her if I could her a lift. And she was very grateful, she got in and it turned out she was walking up this hill to visit her husband in the hospital.

*Q: Oh, boy.*

RICHARDSON: And I saw Parisians doing that, but of course there was no traffic, so there was none of the usual road rage and impatience. There was an incident though, I remember where an Algerian pompier, a gas station attendant, was killed because people got nervous and excited when the gas ran out. And another incident of violence, some protestors down in Lyon rolled a truckload of heavy stones and things like that down a hill, and it killed a policeman. I really thought “it was going to hit the fan now.” But somehow they got through it. There were many demonstrations in Paris. One night my wife and I didn't get to the theater because we ran into a wall of tear gas and couldn't get through. But, that was an exciting time and much of my work consisted of finding people, tourists, particularly students, and trying to reassure their parents that they were fine. And I said for “God sakes. Write home.” They said but there's no post office. Well, call them on the telephone.

*Q: Did you have problems with students getting out there and joining the protests because this was many a student movement.*

RICHARDSON: Yes, yes, but not much. Most were simple tourist bystanders.

*Q: I was wondering whether they were getting picked up along with...*

RICHARDSON: You know sometimes the cops would go through and they would surround a neighborhood or an area and make a complete sweep of everybody. And so the Americans caught up in it would complain they pushed us around, but they didn't really keep them in there. When they found that they were foreigners and they didn't have anything on them, they let them go. But, they'd hold them for a while, while they went through their papers.

*Q: Who was the ambassador when you were there?*

RICHARDSON: Chuck [Chet] Bohlen. He was the ambassador all the time I was there.

*Q: He was always a thorough professional.*

RICHARDSON: Yes. But, I saw him just once when I made a call on arriving.

*Q: How did you find the French staff in the counselor section?*

RICHARDSON: There were those hired right after the war, a few of them were still working. They had more middle class backgrounds than working class because right after the war, they were the ones who spoke English and they were from a different class and I had, we had one of those left. I'll tell you a story about her. One of the things that I was always doing in Death and Estates was collecting the personal effects of the deceased, packing them up and sending them off to the family. And she was very impressed with the packages, with my packing, how well, how neatly they were done. And she remarked on this to one of the other Vice Consuls and one Vice Consul of them said to her, “Well, it's very possible that he did this before the Foreign Service, maybe he was a shipping clerk or wrapped packages in a department store.” And that was a very wild ... that was absolutely absurd, she thought. [Laughter]. Diplomats don't do things like that. So we had one person like that. The others were good solid people, but they were not of that class. One of them,

who I was closest to, I could say she trained me in Welfare and Protection work, like any second lieutenant gets trained by a good sergeant.

*Q: Yes, oh, absolutely.*

RICHARDSON: Yes. I stayed in touch with her for many years.

*Q: Well, then in '68 you left to go there.*

RICHARDSON: Yes.

*Q: Where did you go then?*

RICHARDSON: I went back to Africa. I went to Accra in Ghana.

*Q: Yes. Was this by request or ...*

ICHARDSON: No, that was an instance I didn't volunteer, that was what came up and it was very good. It was very good. I ended up spending 3 years there ... what was a 2 year assignment.

*Q: This would be '68 to when?*

RICHARDSON: '71.

*Q: '71.*

RICHARDSON: Yes. I enjoyed the tour because of the people. I still find it to be true, because I meet a lot of Ghanaians here in Washington, they were, without a doubt, among the most gracious people I have ever worked among or worked with. They're delightful.

*Q: What were you doing in Ghana?*

RICHARDSON: In Ghana, very small consular section, I was it. It was a light consular workload. I had two employees, two national staff, that's all. This was before visas became a problem in West Africa.

*Q: Who was the ambassador then?*

RICHARDSON: McIlhenny.

*Q: Where stood the government of Ghana when you were there ... things fluctuate ... ?*

RICHARDSON: By the time I got there, was it Nkrumah?

*Q: Nkrumah? Was he still there? No.*

RICHARDSON: No. It was the military police coup, which evidently didn't cause us any problem and there didn't seem to be any serious abuse of human rights and there wasn't evidently much to steal so it may really have been typically political reasons for getting rid of Nkrumah.

*Q: Well, was it, you were saying the Ghanaians were an easy people to work with?*

RICHARDSON: Gracious, really. I've never served or worked with people more gracious. For me, they're an outstanding quality of the time I spent with them. And I was there ... I had originally gone for 2 years, and I spent a third. I spent a third, you want to know why I spent the third?

*Q: Yes.*

RICHARDSON: When I went to Ghana, I went there first and my wife followed me by about a month or so because she had gone to Tunisia and Libya because we had both gotten very interested in French North Africa and Libya. We had read a book on North Africa written by one of the Sitwells. He'd written a book called Mauritania. Not what we

call Mauritania today, but evidently in the Roman times, it was much of the Northern tier and we had read about, in his book, about it was a trip in that area. And we'd gotten interested in it, particularly in reference to some underground dwellers called Troglodytes. I couldn't go because I had to get to post. You know, you should have arrived yesterday. My wife stopped off, and when I met her at the airport in Accra, almost her first words to me were, “I will never set foot in Libya again unless my plane is shot down.” No problem. There's no chance of me going to Libya so ... well, almost two years later, I get a cable from the department, and guess where they're sending me to ... Tripoli, in Libya.

*Q: Oh, boy.*

RICHARDSON: Suddenly that conversation comes back to me: “I'm never going to set foot in that country again.” Well, I wasn't all that keen on going there either so I went to my DCM, McFarland and said look at this. And he said, “So.” I said, “I can't take this home.” [Laughter]. He says, “Okay, I'll fix that.” So he got me a third year in Accra, which couldn't have pleased me more.

*Q: Well, what was the consular ...*

RICHARDSON: But, I later met the man who got that assignment.

*Q: And what did he think of it?*

RICHARDSON: I didn't ask him, I didn't want to hear. He might have said he liked it.

*Q: What were the consular problems of Ghana?*

RICHARDSON: Very few. Very, very few. There were no visa problem. And the one plane crash I had was a DC-3 put down on a beach somewhere, but the one American on the plane walked away from it. The only other, I don't remember, oh, there was one incident of a group of African-American youngsters who had come out on a charter flight, whole bunch of them, with not too many supervising adults, but enough. They weren't a problem

as delinquents or anything like that, but the charter went bust and they were stranded. And so, they were anxious and their parents were anxious and the American woman who was in charge of them was very anxious so that was a problem. But, they finally got some transportation arranged for them. But my DCM was concerned they were demonstrating outside and inside of the embassy. The embassy wasn't one of these fortress things like we have now, this was completely accessible to the street, no physical security, you could, anybody could walk in, walk up the stairs. It was one of those showcases of American architecture.

*Q: Oh, yes. It looked like a drum.*

RICHARDSON: Yes. And set up on piles. Well, it was a beautiful building, but lousy office space [laughter]. You could, if it's raining, you could not go from one office to another without getting wet. So they were demonstrating and McFarland took them, the whole bunch of them who were demonstrating, got them into cars and took them home and fed them hotdogs and defused the situation. I thought that was very good. But, there were no notable consular problems. The highlights of that tour was a long conversation with Sidney Poitier. He played the young man in, “Guess Whose Coming to Dinner.” Well, Sidney Poitier calls up and asks for an appointment with me. Wow! So, sure he could come in, you know, fix the time. And I'm apprehensive because my idea of what celebrities are, like you know, coming in and making demands because of who they are. This could not have been more different from the way he was. He was one of the sweetest, most gracious people I've ever dealt with of any importance. No, his daughter was marrying or had married a young Ghanaian engineer and he wanted to know what was involved in him getting a visa to come to the United States. And he didn't really make any demands, he actually just wanted to know what's involved. He wasn't demanding any special speedy service or anything of that sort. I would have given him the store. He, oh he, was charming. And also his daughter was beautiful and the young engineer was

handsome. They made a beautiful couple. So that was a high point of my consular work in Accra.

*Q: [Laughter].*

RICHARDSON: Well, something else must have happened in three years, but I never had to increase the staff. As a matter of fact, I fired one of the two of them for malfeasance, for work that was so sloppy it had to be deliberate. Anyway, I fired him. So I ended up with one clerk, so you know we weren't very busy, nothing very serious happened. My office was beyond the clerk's office and the public entrance so I heard somebody come in and so I called out to them and I said, “Well the clerk's not here. Come in. What can I do for you?” Not looking, you know, hollering because it was a short distance ... they could hear me. I do this two, three times. Finally in exasperation, I get up and I go to the door and there I'm looking at two deaf people who are talking to each other with their hands. I felt like a horse's rear end. I forget why they wanted to see me. But I felt terrible. [Laughter].

*Q: Well, I think this is probably a good place to stop and we'll pick this up again in 1972.*

RICHARDSON: When I went to Belgium.

*Q: So we'll pick it up then. Well, I'm off for the next week, but how about the week after?*

RICHARDSON: Well, the week after is when I'm leaving for Europe ...

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*Q: Today is the 6th of October, 2003 and you were mentioning, you met the American movie actor, Sydney Poitier. You might have mentioned this.*

RICHARDSON: Well, I got a call one day and the person identified himself as Sidney Poitier, this was in Ghana. In Accra and asked if he could come in to see me. Well, of course he could come into see me. When would you like to come in? He said his

flight leaves tomorrow, 10:00, fine. But, I'm a little concerned because this is a big, high powered guy and I didn't know what he wanted and he might very well be someone difficult to deal with. He turned up and he wasn't at all difficult to deal with. He was one of the most charming, delightful, sweetest person I think I've ever dealt with in the Foreign Service. And what his problem was wasn't a problem, he just wanted information. His daughter, beautiful girl, was marrying a young Ghanaian engineer and he wanted to know what was involved in them getting a visa to go to the United States and that's all it was, but it was a thoroughly delightful, oh 35, 40 minutes I spent with him. [Laughter]. Memorable because I had been apprehensive of what the person was going to be like and he turned out, he charmed me, absolutely. You could tell he is a real gentleman.

*Q: Okay, 1972, you're off to Belgium. You were in Belgium from when to when?*

RICHARDSON: I got there, the last days of '71 and I left in February of '75.

*Q: Alright, what was your job?*

RICHARDSON: I was head of the Consular section there. It was a stand alone operation so I wasn't in the embassy building or in the chancery. And had, except for the staff meeting, very little contact with the chancery, except when somebody wanted a visa for some V.I.P. [Very Important Person]. I was called to the embassy only twice, once because some Americans were stranded by a bankrupt charter flight and another time when I refused a visa to the personal doctor of the King's sister.

*Q: Well, was it at all complicated for you because you had something like three embassies in Brussels, don't you ... ?*

RICHARDSON: Yes. NATO and the European Community, any relations I had with them were social. They did not impinge on my operation at all.

*Q: What was the main type of work you were doing as Consular Officer?*

RICHARDSON: Well, the main operation of the office, we had modest consular operation. Very little in the way of I.V.s and I had a very competent staff. The biggest part of the operation was in American services because of the military presence there, they were forever registering births. And, as a matter of fact, the army even gave the office a full-time clerk, a military man who came in and assisted in the American services section to deal with the military side of our operation.

*Q: Well, I had that same thing in Saigon where the army sent us a clerk who was a Harvard graduate, getting his Ph.D. and got drafted so it was a good place to put him, I guess.*

RICHARDSON: I didn't realize they were drafting graduate students.

*Q: Well, they got them. They got them.*

RICHARDSON: Because we got several people, I think they're still in the Senate who got Ph.D.s in those ends [Laughter].

*Q: Did you have many problems with arrest cases, seamen, shipping, this type of thing?*

RICHARDSON: Seamen and shipping, no, because at that time, Antwerp was still open so if any seamen problems came up, Antwerp dealt with them. No, we had lots of Americans, one group insisted on sending Bibles to Muslim countries and their people doing the distribution would get in trouble in various Muslim countries. The headquarters of this outfit was in Brussels and so they'd come in and demand that the U.S. government do something about their people who were under arrest for distributing Bibles. But, the usual, you would get in a place like Brussels, and certainly it was true in Paris. You'd get people who are maintained abroad by their families ...

*Q: Remittance men and women.*

RICHARDSON: [Laughter]. Yes and some of them were quite delightful. I had one in Brussels who later turned up in Ecuador.

*Q: Did they cause problems?*

RICHARDSON: No, no. Sure they caused problems, but no. But no, no serious ones. They weren't violent, they were eccentric. For instance, the one who later turned up in Ecuador had an amusing incident with a Vice Consul working for me who later distinguished herself in Bordeaux, Judy Heiman. She was taking this fellow out to the airport to put him on a plane. We were repatriating him and he was very tall, with a silky gray beard. The carpet at the airport there in Brussels is bright red and he thought it would look splendid if he stretched out, something like Christ on the cross, with his beard. Judy said he was a stunning sight. She had to speak to him in her most schoolmarmish fashion to persuade him to get up and get on that aircraft. [Laughter]. Yes, he later turned up in Ecuador when I was filling in for the Consul General down in Guayaquil. The Consul General had to take his wife up to the hospital in Panama so I went down to fill in for him and I got a report there that there was an American up at the last small port before you cross over into Colombia who was running down the street stark naked. Okay. I heard about him and when he turns up in Guayaquil, he greets me like an old friend. It was this guy from Brussels who was then pleased to give me a photograph of himself because we were such good old friends. So, those were the kinds of things we had, there were no serious problems, I don't think I had any serious, I had people under arrest, but that's routine for most places.

*Q: Did the Belgian police give you good access?*

RICHARDSON: Excellent. I had very good relations with the police chief in charge of foreigners. And so I had no problem in terms of cooperation at all. As a matter of fact, you'd say it was an easy tour. There were interesting things. Russians turned up. This was back in the ?70s and Russians turned up demanding to go to the United States. They were

registered as refugees and things were moving too slowly for them so they came in, they wanted some action out of the embassy.

*Q: Was there any, from the consular point of view, any sort of ripple effect from the fact that for so long Belgium had had the Congo, and Rwanda and Burundi... There were a lot of missionaries down there. Did that have any reflection ...*

RICHARDSON: No because at this time, at this point something like at least a decade had passed ...

*'61 was essentially when the Congo blew up ...*

RICHARDSON: Yes and by this time they, any things that might have turned up in Brussels as a result of their colonial activities were long since passed and the movement from the Congo, Rwanda and Burundi, the migration seemed not to be very, very active.

*Q: Things had pretty well settled down.*

RICHARDSON: In fact, several years later when I visited Brussels I became conscious of the neighborhoods in which sub-Saharan Africans were very well represented.

*Q: Did you, in your work and all, pick up any of the split between the Flemish and the, what was it the Flemish and French ... ?*

RICHARDSON: Flemish and the French, yes.

*Q: I mean in Belgium?*

RICHARDSON: Oh, yes, you're very conscious of that even in Brussels where the language is French. When, for instance, when I traveled in the Flemish area, I spoke more English than I spoke French. If I had to ask someone directions or was in any way approached in Flemish, I would speak in English. Half the time they spoke English so there

wasn't any problem, but if they spoke no English, they would initiate French, “Well, do you speak French?” And then we could go on from there. I wasn't going to put myself in the spot of annoying anyone by starting off in French because I had seen that happen and I had heard, others had told me about it. For instance, Ken Brown... I was sitting in on a briefing Ken Brown was giving to some young diplomats in the Foreign Office. He initiated his briefing in French to the great annoyance of some of them who then reminded him that there were two languages in the country and all of them spoke English anyhow. [Laughter].

*Q: How about, any of the staffing of the consular section, was it purely French speaking?*

RICHARDSON: My staff was all French speaking Flemish, certainly the lady, the senior member who handled notarials and things of that sort, she was Flemish. She was from Antwerp. The three women doing visas, at least 2 were Flemish, I think the third one was Flemish also. And when I arrived, my receptionist was Flemish. She left and I got a young woman. Her mother was Argentine, her father was Austrian and she was fluent in French and spoke some Flemish and she was the receptionist. But, I would say I was not conscious of any division, but I realize I didn't have any basis, I just realized I didn't have any basis for that. I was not conscious of it in the embassy, but Ken who worked, actually worked in the chancellery could better tell you about this. The staff was bilingual French and Flemish as well as English. And several of them had German as well.

*Q: When you left there, how did you find the social life there? Were the Belgians fairly open?*

RICHARDSON: Yes. Yes because of the language I did better with any Belgian who spoke French and/or English, so my social relations tended to be more in the Walloon side, but I had lots of contacts, useful contacts, Flemish contacts. The police chief, I think was originally Flemish, but her English and her French were fluent.

*Q: You left there in '75. Where did you go?*

RICHARDSON: Ecuador, which was very exciting because I had never been in the mountains before.

*Q: So you were in Ecuador, you were up in the Quito from '72 to when?*

RICHARDSON: '75.

*Q: Excuse me, '75 to ...*

RICHARDSON: '75 to '77.

*Q: What was your job there?*

RICHARDSON: Head of Consular Section.

*Q: Who was the ambassador?*

RICHARDSON: When I went there, the ambassador was a man named Robert Brewster and his DCM with the surname Brewster whose nickname was Bru.

*Q: What was the political situation in Ecuador when you got there?*

RICHARDSON: When I got there, there was a military regime. There had been a military coup some years before and the dictator was a little round man, what did they call him: “El Gordito.” Is that the fat one, something like that. While I was, in fact while I was still in the hotel before I got permanent housing, because it took a while to get me housed permanently so I spent three months in the Colon Hotel. There was an attempted coup and there was a lot of gunfire actually, it was right outside the hotel, woke us up. But it was a dictatorship. After I left they had an election and elected a president.

*Q: What sort of consular work did you have?*

RICHARDSON: Well, some drugs, but most of it was Welfare and Protection. Americans managed to fall off Machu Picchu, drown in the surf off of Guayaquil, get lost in the jungle, get into difficulties like that. As I recall, the drug traffic had not yet developed into anything serious. That was later on when I was in Peru. So it was a time of the wandering, youth taking a year off from college, and so they'd go down the spine of the Andes, smoking pot. So we got a lot of them and they had a regular hangout ... hostels and small inexpensive hotels. So if I needed to locate them, or one, I could leave messages. There was a bookstore that was very popular with them named Leaves of Grass in Spanish and you could leave a note on the board up there if the family said they were heading that way and they would turn up. That was useful, that particular bookstore. An American had disappeared, one of the backpacking wanderers, in Central America, and the family produced a notice with his photograph and a description and nailed it to all of the consulates down Central America and down through South America. We posted it on the bulletin board of this bookstore and somebody turned up and said he thought he might know something about that. He had been asked, I forget in which Central American country, to see if he could identify the nude body of a possibly American male that they had found. They suspected it was a gringo that they had found, stripped of clothing, everything. And the young man said no, I've never seen him before, but when he saw the photograph on the bulletin board, he said, “That looks like him” and we put him in touch with the family and whoever was conducting the investigation for the family and I think it was a positive identification.

*Q: Well, were there problems about these young people on their “wanderjahr,” with the local populace? I mean there must be bandits and other things of that nature.*

RICHARDSON: Yes. There were. As a matter of fact that's how I made national television, NBC did an expose of the government, but didn't I discuss this before?

*Q: No, I don't think so, no.*

RICHARDSON: No. During my tenure, we had 3 Americans disappear in our consular district. Two of them, a young couple, engaged, traveling together went off into the headlands leading down to the Amazon looking for herbs that could be useful medically. Neither of them had any medical background, but that's what they were supposedly doing. And they disappeared. Now, they had been the guests on the farm of this one man who operated a restaurant down in the south that catered to the young wanderers, passing through, I say wanderers because there were Germans and French going through also. He cultivated them so of course he came under suspicion but nothing came of it. No, nobody knew anything. They just disappeared. Okay.

Then there was a young woman of South Asian origin, a very adventurous type, she climbed- (end of tape)

*Q: You were saying this young woman in the ?30s who had been all around ... she ...*

RICHARDSON: And so obviously a very capable person, she disappeared one Sunday morning from the town of Ba#os. Sunday morning, people were out on the street, on their way to and from church. We had the embassy in Stockholm interview a Swede who had been staying in the same hostel as she and with whom she had had breakfast that day. Her room, in her room were her climbing boots so it isn't as if she was going off to do anything, any difficult walking or climbing this Sunday morning. She simply disappeared and the police weren't able to find her. Friends she had made prepared circulars which they spread around. She had made many friends. She was very sociable. I prodded the police in Banos and Quito but nothing came of it. Well, with three such things happening in a relatively short space of time, this attracted press. And we had an NBC investigative reporter coming down to do a story, to find out what had gone on. That sort of thing. Well, there were all kinds of curious things with it. An investigator hired by the families of the couple from one of the agencies in Florida, but the name doesn't come to me, it's a well known agency ...

*Q: Pinkerton or something ...*

RICHARDSON: Something like that. One of those. So he came down. I briefed him on what we had and he went off, didn't come near me again. He went back to Florida and reported that he had been visiting an Indian village not far from where they'd disappeared and the people were very nervous about him and he thought he saw a couple of shrunken heads being hidden. [Laughter] He didn't come in and tell us and police about it. He doesn't tell the police about what he suspected, but goes back to Florida where it's now, three weeks have passed since the incident so if there had been anything there, it was long since gone. Why he didn't report it to us so we could tell the police about his suspicion was probably that it didn't amount to anything anyhow. Shrinking heads ... it's pretty far out, but it could have been followed up. Instead, that became another mark against the embassy and the police because they didn't know about the shrunken heads, alleged shrunken heads. An NBC reporter came down and got apprehensive because he wasn't getting anything. And NBC had spent all this money and brought the camera crew and I thought they're not going to leave without some story. So, I had an inkling of what it was going to be. It was going to be an expose. This is how things work. And it turned out, that's what it was.

They opened with my interview, I guess I got about five, six minutes on screen out of a total of about 45 minutes, 50 minutes. It started off with one of these, “when have you stopped beating your wife” questions. So I knew where it was going. Oh, yes. Before I can tell you about that, I had not notified the parents immediately of the disappearance of their daughter. I tried to get a lead on it. I went down to Banos. I took our police liaison down with me. I prodded the police because nothing's worse than a disappeared child. You would rather have a body, you'd rather have something of definite news about “what happened to my child?” So I didn't notify them for a week, trying to get a lead on her. When I couldn't, I sent a cable through the Department, you know the relay system, to the family informing them. Well, when another week went by and I hadn't heard from them,

I telephoned Washington and found out that that cable had never gone on to them. So somebody in the Department then telephoned them so it was on the order of almost three weeks after the disappearance that the family finally heard. Well, that looks bad. So the first question that he put to me was: “Mr. Richardson, don't you think it was terribly callous to not inform the family of the disappearance of their daughter?” And I explained, the reason was compassion and screw up. Yes, the first week was compassion, the second week was because the cable never went through. Well, that's how he started off ... Wasn't it callous? So, he's already planted the seed. Okay but that's not the worst thing he did.

Another case, during the same period, was of a young man who was traveling with the same restaurant and farm owner who had cultivated the missing couple. But he was traveling in the outback with this young man. He was giving him a ride, the kid had also been to the farm. The kid had stopped taking his medication and died out there in the boonies at this little village where the people are scraping a subsistence living out of the land they cleared in the jungle. They were very poor. Well, what had they done? They put their pennies together in order to provide a decent burial for this kid. This had been organized by the local priest. Well, down there, they don't bury people in the ground, they have above ground structures to hold caskets.

*Q: Ah, oh, yes. Volts.*

RICHARDSON: In effect, they're really just slots, places that would accommodate a small casket. Well, that's how they bury there because the water level is so high they can't dig a hole. Well, this investigative reporter is interviewing the family of this boy on camera. Okay. So he's interviewing them. How did the boy do in school? And then he turns to them and there are the two parents sitting on the sofa and he says, Well, do you realize that your son isn't buried in the ground? Well, they went ballistic. “They never told us he wasn't buried. Why didn't the embassy tell us?” They were shocked. That was, I think, the foulest thing I've ever seen. It used to characterize that sort of thing as, what is it, 60 Minutes.

*Q: Yes.*

RICHARDSON: 60 Minutes journalism. It has since improved a bit. That's what he did to these people, and I thought that was the foulest thing that I had seen. The whole program was condemning the embassy and the State Department. I think the title of it was “Passport to Nowhere.” Well, a fallout from that is for several years after that when I would find myself over in Rosslyn at the old FSI site there and I would be riding up in the elevator, I could tell who the most recent recruits were because this film was the first thing they showed them in the A-100 class. [Laughter]. I'd find them looking at me, thinking do I know him? Where do I know him from?

*Q: Oh, God.*

RICHARDSON: Okay, so that was really the high point, well the low point, I mean now there's more to it than I can dwell on. Over the years, I've been useful to a great number of people. Many of them wrote to me in Quito when they saw this television program because it's quite condemnatory. Saying, you know, I remember when you helped us, we don't believe the image that this guy was portraying. Several people wrote to me. The other people who accepted what he said wrote to the Department of State or to the Secretary and said “Fire him.”

*Q: Oh, boy.*

RICHARDSON: So, I forwarded the letters I got from my fans to the State, but it's not the same thing. It seemed self-serving.

*Q: So, what happened? What was the Department's reaction?*

RICHARDSON: None, in terms of like supporting me or ...

*Q: Supporting you or not supporting you?*

RICHARDSON: No, they were neutral. They were neutral. They didn't take a position. They left it to the post.

*Q: Did you find that this dogged you through your career?*

RICHARDSON: No, no. The only follow-up I did send to the Assistant Secretary was, that I think since they're using this film in the training course, I should get residuals. She laughed. But, there was something else to do with this ...Within six months of this TV program, someone came and reported to me that an American girl had been raped in Ba#os. I set Debby, my vice consul to work locating the girl. So, we had her name, so there are all these hostels, these hotels known to us where young wanders stayed. Debbie got on the phone and located her. Why had the young woman not reported it? Because she had seen this film and knew that the embassy wasn't the least bit interested in her problem.

*Q: Oh, God.*

RICHARDSON: Okay. Well, that didn't end there. Debby ...

*Q: Debby being ...*

RICHARDSON: Vice consul.

*Q: Debby, what was her?*

RICHARDSON: Debby, Debby ... It'll come to me.

*Q: Yes.*

RICHARDSON: It was her first tour, but she was very capable. And she has since done very well. Got a car, a driver, and Debby went to Banos with our embassy police liaison, a retired Equatorial police captain. He had gone with me when I went to Banos. Three of

them drive off, pick up the girl at the hotel where Debby had located her. And they go to Ba#os and light a little fire under the police there. They go out, accompanied by a couple of cops around the hills, because this girl has been hiking by herself in the hills around Ba#os. And so they followed the route that she had and low and behold they find and arrest the shepherd who had raped her. Well, it worked great and I gave the story to a visiting American reporter who was very interested. I had hoped to somewhat balance the bad press we had gotten about the disappearance of the Americans. He got very enthusiastic but it never saw the light of day. And that good story, that happy ending, never saw print.

*Q: What was your reading on this place that was the focal point of this so-called investigative report? You know this Ecuadorian who was befriending these people.*

RICHARDSON: Well, he was a relation to someone of influence because he never got the kind of interrogation that I know the police are capable of, which I could not suggest they do because you don't do that. They hadn't even taken him into custody. So finally we got enough pressure on them. They took him into custody, but still, they didn't interrogate him as they could have. So I feel very much he had some protection. Now, he wasn't responsible for anybody's death, but we just felt that he had to have known more. He could have been more helpful. My personal opinion is that he was not at the farm where these two people disappeared. He cultivated young Americans, or young travelers going through. He was not on the farm so he couldn't be held directly responsible. It may have been that the young woman in Banos attracted the attention of some of the workers out there, they got frisky and the young man objected and she may have gotten raped and the boy killed, and the bodies buried in the jungle. That's certainly a possibility. I can't think of anything else. The young woman might possibly have slipped, there's a fast running stream, running through Ba#os, fast running, really moving. She could well have been wandering around there and slipped into the water and been swept down to the Amazon. That's a possibility. But any violence against her ... somebody in town would have seen it, people would have, there are people in the streets. Now, if the person who assaulted her,

if that was an assault, was someone very well connected then that's when nobody would see anything.

*Q: Yes. Did, you left there in '77.*

RICHARDSON: Right.

*Q: At the embassy, how did people treat you after the, you know being the focal point of this 60 minute thing?*

RICHARDSON: Oh, it didn't affect anything. It didn't involve any celebrity because the condemnation was general and the ambassador was also interviewed. The State Department was condemned and the embassy, so we were all on the same footing.

*Q: In '77 where did you go?*

RICHARDSON: I went in for a year of language training in Farsi, preparing for an assignment in Iran.

*Q: How did you find Farsi?*

RICHARDSON: Difficult, difficult. And I never really accomplished very much with it because, by the time I got there, there wasn't much opportunity for the kind of casual interaction with the local populace by which you build up a language capability. People were as likely to spit on me as to converse casually or to correct my Farsi.

*Q: Well, you were out there in what '78, '79?*

RICHARDSON: Right.

*Q: Well, what, when you arrived in Tehran, what was it like?*

RICHARDSON: Well, it really heated up a few months later with riots. Martial law was declared and then it got tight. There was a curfew and you had to be off the street by 8:00. If you wanted to get together with somebody for one reason or another, you had to schedule it for like 5 to get home by 7 or 8. I can remember racing through the streets to get home in time.

*Q: You were doing consular work then ...*

RICHARDSON: I was head of the NIV section.

*Q: That must have been, you know, Iranians have stood for years have been a pain in the neck for counselor officers. I found that up in Yugoslavia and in Athens and other places ...*

RICHARDSON: The consular section was a stand alone facility, but the demand was so great that, that was yet another stand alone facility. It was in one corner of the chancery compound wall. In the main consular section we had IVs, NIVs, Welfare and Protection and Citizenship services.

*Q: Who was in charge of the consular section?*

RICHARDSON: Lou Goelz.

*Q: Great.*

RICHARDSON: You know Lou.

*Q: I know Lou.*

RICHARDSON: Yes. Yes he was in charge of it when I worked there.

*Q: Well, how did you find, what were the demands on you because Iran was going through a revolution. There were a hell of a lot of people who were trying to get out.*

RICHARDSON: Yes, there was heavy volume, but of course there had been frequent travel to the U.S., so most of them had visas. The middle class all had their visas already. The heaviest of anything was in students and people who wanted to get out. Our volume at the heaviest approached 100,000, which is not heavy.

*Q: Well, how did you find, how were you looking at, not looking at the visas, a person asking to go to the United States in the middle of a revolution from a very ...*

RICHARDSON: There was civil disturbance, but the revolution didn't take place until the Shah left and Khomeini came back then you start talking about the revolution, that's when the government changed.

*Q: So after, when you first arrived ...*

RICHARDSON: It was pretty non-violent.

*Q: Yes, so there wasn't an extraordinary demand then for ...*

RICHARDSON: Oh, there was ... and we were busy, it wasn't all that big of a staff and as I said the volume as I remember was approaching 100,000, maybe 10,000 a month at our busiest and that was when the staff was really reduced. So we were busy. Yes, we were under the gun, but it was a very exciting time to be there because nowhere else in the world, as I wrote to Judy Heimann, do we have priests with guns getting their hands in the levers of power and political authority. That was exciting. When the families were given voluntary departure in December 1978, I lost my most valuable colleague, a PIT American Foreign Service spouse.

*Q: Well, was there much discussion within the embassy and all about what was happening?*

RICHARDSON: Oh, yes. There were daily staff meetings, who did what to whom, the political section and the agency were busy with these things all the time, but the Shah was still there.

*Q: Were you all feeling ...*

RICHARDSON: But there was the unrest and there was marshal law, but what you had was great numbers of people enriched during the economic boom following the quadrupling of the oil price some years before. You had tremendous projects of construction going on in the city. The national bird was the Crane and to supply the labor, a lot of the people, country people came into town and they brought with them their values and their children who were influenced by the big city and going to the university and probably giving lip to their parents and breaking with the old, proper way of doing things. There was this social turbulence going on and hostility to the Westernization that was going on of which the Shah was a leading proponent.

*Q: Well, then you were saying, you felt uncomfortable getting out in public places as an American, I mean you know, identify yourself as an American.*

RICHARDSON: Well, not until after Khomeini came back.

*Q: Well, when the Shah left, was that, did that sort of pull the plug. I mean were people trying to get out at that point?*

RICHARDSON: Yes. Yes, as I said many already had visas. Well, I followed the philosophy of NIV issuance if they had financial interests in the country, land owners, factory owners, people of substance, for whom there wasn't any question; that is, when things improved, they would return. They didn't want to leave and abandon their goods. Well, I think we had the same philosophy in Beirut, some years before. If they had a

reason to come back we would give them a visa. If they don't have a reason to come back, they don't qualify.

*Q: Well, were you, was the volume of applications picking up?*

RICHARDSON: Yes. Yes and our staff was reduced. We had voluntary departure of dependents on December 8th of '78, I guess. Okay. The embassy was attacked on February, early February ...

*Q: I think February 14th ...*

RICHARDSON: Oh, was it 14th. My wife left on the 4th of February when she and the ambassador's wife and the last of the wives left. That would have been February 4th. 10 days later there was the attack and after and there were several hours of captivity. Soon after that incident the word came down that anybody who wanted to leave could do so. Great numbers of the American staff left, many going to join their families who were already evacuated and so then we struggled along. I became Chief of the whole Consular Section. I still had my local staff, Chief of the Consular Section, except I was the only American officer there for several weeks and then one fellow came back from leave and there were two of us. He was very good because this was the time when young men formed armed groups and the streets were under the control of young men with guns. NIV visa operations stopped except for medical emergencies. You couldn't imagine how many of these, what do you call these, quadruple by-passes surgeries became necessary. What was the name of the doctor in Texas?

*Q: _____*

RICHARDSON: It must have made his fortune.

*Q: Well, this was a man in _____ Houston.*

RICHARDSON: Yes. And he was. He had to have been a very busy surgeon because suddenly, almost anybody with a good deal of money who didn't already have a visa was applying for a visa on medical emergency because he needed quadruple bypass surgery. But, he had the money to pay for it. Okay, so those guys, they went. For what they were worth, they were confirming medical certs and appointments in Texas.

*Q: So then were you there, what happened to you when they took over initially on February 14th?*

RICHARDSON: I didn't go to work that day. We hadn't been to work, for 2-3 days before the attack. The Iranian soldiers that were guarding the embassy compound were suddenly withdrawn, so the word went out, don't go to the embassy. Well, two days went by and there were no incidents so a bunch of us got together in one of the officer's houses in the neighborhood and we had a drink to celebrate the fact that we had gotten through 2 days with no difficulty. There hadn't been any soldiers guarding us, but there hadn't been an attack. The next day some people who just couldn't stay away from the office went in and got captured because that's when they came over the walls and took the embassy for those few hours. But, there was still a government that could stand up to the mob and had sufficient clout and prestige to be able to tell them, okay stop that, let these people go half a year later, why that wasn't possible. We had one person killed in that incident, one of the national employees, I think someone working in the cafeteria. And we had one marine shot. He gave up his gun as he was instructed to do and the ham-handed klutz who took it shot him with. But, it was an accident and not fatal. So then those of us who didn't go to work that day kept in touch by phone on what was going on. And then finally the captives were released and we went back to work. That was the same day our ambassador was killed in Kabul.

During that period, Khomeini came back, and I was still living in my apartment, several miles from the new consulate location in the Chancery. They later made me move to a building right across the street from the back Chancery entrance. Before then I came out

of my house one morning got into my car which had a c.d. plate and just got down the street when a car stops me with 4 armed young men. And what do they want to know? They ask me in Farsi, where the American consul lives. [Laughter]. Whoo. In my Farsi, as I said, never became very good, but it was evidently good enough that I was able to tell them, “Gee, I don't know.” Happily we're not dealing with the swiftest guys on the block. They don't even look at the plates. I was driving an American car, which was not that unusual but I had c.d. plates and didn't have a mustache. And I'm sure my accent, my Farsi accent wasn't all that good, but they accepted it, and I drove off. That was as close as I came to being captured.

*Q: Well, then, of course the big takeover was when? In November or something ...*

RICHARDSON: Yes.

*Q: But you were out of there by then?*

RICHARDSON: No. I was still assigned; I just went out for a couple of weeks leave to visit my wife.

*Q: Uh, huh.*

RICHARDSON: So we were in the cafeteria of the embassy in Amman, having lunch when someone came in and said there was something going on in Tehran, I think you better go upstairs and check it out and that's when I found out that they had come over the walls again, only this time to stay.

*Q: Had there been any, in the time between the February thing and the time you went on home leave, I mean on short leave to Amman to see your wife, was there any, I mean were things getting worse and worse?*

RICHARDSON: Oh, yes. Oh, sure. But, even before my wife left, I remember coming home one night when the office was already dark and realized that my wife, in our kitchen,

which faced the street, was silhouetted against, the light. So I, next day, I got heavy drapes in so that wouldn't happen because I was afraid somebody might fire a shot at her. They did at our naval attach#, the navy captain and he came very, very close. He was answering the telephone and whatever the conversation was he wanted to make a note of something the person was telling him, but he dropped the pen and as he bent down to pick up the pen the shot hit the wall where he had been. Well, that was the end of his regular tour. We had been in Farsi language training together. But, that's so this was in my mind when I saw my wife's outline in the window. I told you we had a local shot and killed, marine shot, and 2 years before a local consular employee going to the embassy to collect mail was shot and killed. An officer usually made this daily trip. During the last days, we had someone down in the oil field servicing agency in the south killed then we had another American killed, but we didn't know what he was doing, he was kind of mysterious. He was a civilian living off somewhere. The consul in Isfahan was stabbed. But, those were the only physical things, but the fear was always there. In Beirut you had a lot of kidnappings and that was my personal concern.

*Q: Was there an idea before you went on the short leave to Amman, were you still talking about hanging in there ...*

RICHARDSON: Oh, we were not only hanging in there, we were building up our staff. We were going to show Khomeini that we could get along. We had turned down staff so low that that I had only one vice consul. An FSO who had retired returned to the foreign service and they said oh you want to come back to the foreign service, we've got a great assignment for you and he came to me. [Laughter]. So that gave me 2 officers, that's all. But then we got a whole bunch of them fresh from Farsi training. All of those people who were aided, and evacuated by the Canadians, except for the Agricultural attach#, all worked for me. We also got a new Consul General, Morefield. He became a hostage.

*Q: It wasn't Kennedy was it, Kennedy Morefield, wait a minute no.*

RICHARDSON: No.

*Q: Anyway Morefield.*

RICHARDSON: It was Morefield. And so this was what was going on. We were on our way back up ...

*Q: Were any of you questioning this ...*

RICHARDSON: About leaving or not?

*Q: Yes.*

RICHARDSON: No, no. The policy was we would show them, we would demonstrate that we can get along. The only way we can do that is to resume normal operations, so I don't know, I don't remember in staff meetings, anyone questioning the wisdom of it.

*Q: Did ...*

RICHARDSON: And also, we were always, frankly we were enjoying ourselves. It was the most exciting assignment in the Foreign Service at that time.

*Q: Oh, sure, yes. I mean of course the Foreign Service sort of blossoms under pressure. What about, were you getting any taste of confrontations or something with the religious types at that point or was it ...*

RICHARDSON: We, well see the religious didn't bother us, it was their anti-Western orientation. The religion didn't matter. Where the religion was showing up was active persecution of the Bahai.

*Q: Of Bahai?*

RICHARDSON: And there was not anti-Semitic activity to my knowledge. There were some accounts to be settled and one member of the family of a Jewish merchant I knew was killed. And many Jews, and Bahai and Christians lost their property. But no active persecution of any one on religious grounds except Bahai.

*Q: Were you seeing any, how about students, I mean you weren't dealing with students, but was there, were they trying to get to Holdernaut or?*

RICHARDSON: Well, they may have been, but we were closed to them. When we reopened in October, then of course they turned up again. And, until we shut down ion February the Mullahs who had been hostile to the U.S., and anti-Western, had no aversion to trying to get somebody in the embassy to get a visa for their nephew, not their niece, but their nephew. [Laughter].

*Q: Well, what happened to you then, I mean all of the sudden you're, when you're first, when you're dealing with, when you're in Amman, what do they do, I mean were they saying, was there an initial thing saying well this will be over soon and we'll get back together again?*

RICHARDSON: No, no. There were only separate sitreps. No one offered an opinion or any predictions. My own personal thing is how do we judge the present in terms of the past and so I thought that I'll hang around here for a few days and then go back to Tehran. So my wife and I stayed in Damascus, which was our base. Then finally, I sent cable to the Department, which they didn't answer, saying that I'm here if you need a consular officer somewhere in the area, I'm available. Well, they never answered any of these cables [Laughter] because they had more important things on their minds.

*Q: Well, what happened to you then?*

RICHARDSON: Ah, well I hung around there waiting for things to develop and then spent a lot of time preparing an inventory on the stuff I left back in my apartment. My wife who

was living in Rome had visited me in July on her way back from a trip to Hong-Kong, on her way back from Hong-Kong, she stopped off and spent 2 weeks with me during which time she bought 12 rugs. All of which I lost. And that's an unlucky number because I had 1 rug of my own to make 13.

*Q: Well, you were saying, you were spending your time inventorying, in Amman.*

RICHARDSON: And also visiting the countryside. This was the time when the area was supposed to be ablaze with anti-American feelings. My wife and I rode public busses around Syria and Jordan and encountered courtesy and consideration.

Well, as I was saying, this is the time when there was supposed to be a blaze of anti-American, anti-Western sentiment and my wife and I rode public buses around Jordan and Syria with no discomfort whatsoever. It produced some amusing things. One time when we were in this very holy city in Syria, we were going to see a famous old giant waterwheel, and we entered a tunnel and my wife who was ahead of us, I was walking with our driver and we saw a Muslim woman go up and tug at her sleeve. What's going on, we picked up our pace, but by the time we got there the nice woman had left and my wife was laughing because the woman had asked her in broken English if she was an American and Pearl said yes and the woman said well, maybe you know my brother in Kansas City. [Laughter] And that is the God's honest truth. [Laughter].

*Q: Well, what was sort of the feeling when you were sitting there at that time that this Iran thing, Tehran thing would be settled by, you know in a little while.*

RICHARDSON: Based on our experience in February, I did not believe that it was going to go on as long as it did; we would return and get on with business. The Department following events in Pakistan ordered all dependents out of the Middle East. You could see that they were taking a very serious view of it so I sent my wife back to Paris where she had moved from Rome. Then I caught an evacuation plane with dependents from the Gulf and went to Rome. There I caught another evacuation flight to Washington. It was about

3-4 weeks after the takeover that I left Damascus. I got back to Washington the 19th of December so it was that long that I hung around Damascus and Rome trying to get an assignment.

*Q: When you get everybody out of the country or draw down, sometimes there is a superfluity of people back in Washington, what to do with them.*

RICHARDSON: Yes, well what did I do? I got a good assignment in Lima. There were also other possibilities.

*Q: Oh, ah Medellin?*

RICHARDSON: I chose Lima. After the capture of the Embassy in February '79 we did not have regular army protection. We had some informal kind of militia that was supposed to be protecting us but they weren't really, they were occupying and controlling access to the compound. I had to fight my way into the compound one day because our captors decided we shouldn't work that day. One day I had a couple of visitors from Rasht on the Caspian Sea. These are people who had come to me on their own, they didn't need visas because they both had visas, there wasn't anything I could do for them. They and their families had visas before I ever met them. They came to me and said, “If you ever need to get out of here, if you're in danger, let us know, we will hide you.” Unsolicited, that was on their own. One of my people came in and told me that the leader of the militia had collected a lot of our documents and is carrying them off ... passports and things like that so I charge down the stairs and I catch him and I get a hold of one end of the box he has and he's got a pistol on his hip and his brother is there cradling an Uzi. Well he and I are going back and forth. I'm very angry. Going back and forth tugging on this box and the brother is like [Laughter] sitting at the center line at the net of a tennis match, he seeing us going back and forth [Laughter] and he's still cradling this Uzi and the young man who had come up to tell me about this was translating what I was saying to this man except he was putting it in very polite language. I was calling this guy every foul thing I could think of because

I was out of my mind with anger and my clerk was saying, “Mr. Richardson said that you shouldn't do that and those documents belong to the embassy.” And this kid is being very polite and then finally the thug that I'm contending with hears something he can repeat. He doesn't know what it means and asks what means, “Son of a beach!” [Laughter]. At which point, I dissolve in laughter and he was so stunned with my change of mood that he lets go of his side of the box and I won.

*Q: Oh, God ...*

RICHARDSON: And, well later on that young man made his way to the States and there was a hearing, there was to be a hearing at an immigration court on whether he would be permitted to stay or be deported. Where the hell they were going to deport him to? His lawyer got in touch with me and I was very happy to write up the incident and send it off. Well, the INS accepted my recommendation and his son has just graduated summa cum laude from John's Hopkins University.

*Q: How wonderful.*

RICHARDSON: Yes. I hadn't I hired him. Personnel sent him to me. And I couldn't figure out why, with the embassy under the gun like it was, any ambitious young Iranian would come to work for us. So I thought he was a spy. I distrusted the young man and he turned out to be my interpreter for the son of a bitch [Laughter]. So that's one of my favorite stories from that period. But also these people, the dentist and the doctor from Rasht, who offered to hide me if need be. Okay, they offered me this choice of posts and I chose Peru and was very glad I did.

*Q: You were in Peru what from ... '80 or?*

RICHARDSON: That would have been '80.

*Q: And so you probably left in '79, you left Tehran in '79. The takeover was in '79.*

RICHARDSON: Then it was '80, I was already in Peru in '80.

*Q: Okay, so probably ...*

RICHARDSON: Because when the hostages were released, my wife went back to Washington to great them. She had worked with the Department's family liaison group.

*Q: Yes, so you were in Peru from '80 to ... how long were you there?*

RICHARDSON: 3 years.

*Q: '83 then.*

RICHARDSON: Yes.

*Q: What were you doing?*

RICHARDSON: There was a fairly good sized operation. I had about 22 people working for me including several vice consuls and a local lawyer.

*Q: What was your job position there?*

RICHARDSON: Oh, Chief of Consular Section.

*Q: Yes.*

RICHARDSON: There was a complete unit there.

*Q: Who was the ambassador at the time?*

RICHARDSON: Ed Corr. Now, you were asking me about Peru, who was in Peru? Oh, Ed Corr, with whom I had served in Ecuador. When I was in Ecuador, he was the Political Counselor, I was Chief of Consular Section. And we had a great dispute on principle.

*Q: What was the principle?*

RICHARDSON: That he wanted something done to accommodate some contact of his and I refused to do it. So we went back and forth, back and forth, and I was in the right, I had, I had a right to do it refuse it.

*Q: Oh yes, I know, I have any of these particularly Chiefs of Political Sections ...*

RICHARDSON: So it went up to the ambassador and the ambassador backed me. Well, 6 weeks later we find out the name of the man who was going to replace the departing DCM ... it's Ed Corr, with whom I had just had this big fight on principle ... well, he's got to be the most decent man in the world, he never referred to the argument. He and I are still friends, it had no effect whatsoever. So he was my DCM and then later on he was my ambassador in Peru. Some years later I inspected El Salvador when he was ambassador.

*Q: And you went to Peru in 1980, what was the situation there?*

RICHARDSON: The situation was also one of a military dictatorship. And while I was there, there was an election and the man elected was the man who had been deposed by the military 10 years earlier so if Rip Van Winkle, a Peruvian Rip Van Winkle, had fallen asleep during his first tenure and awakened after the election, he would have still found the same president in their white house. I always thought that that would have been an amusing idea for a story.

*Q: Well, now we've gone through some rather difficult periods of Peru with a military that was not vehemently deposed towards the United States and there was nationalization of some international property and all that. How were things at the time you were there?*

RICHARDSON: Well, by the time I had gotten there, whatever the bad feelings had pretty much passed on, problems if not been resolved, they had been suspended. The military was in control and a lot of military checkpoints on the road. My wife and I were driving from

Lake Titicaca back into the country, and we encountered an incredible number of military checkpoints.

*Q: Well, was this the time of, what was it, the Shining Path?*

RICHARDSON: Yes.

*Q: This was a pretty scary situation, wasn't it?*

RICHARDSON: We had an embassy bombed at that time. It knocked out, about I think, a hundred windows. They had built a protected area for the marine guard and it had just been completed like a week or 10 days before this bombing and happily, that's where the marine guard was, in his appointed place when the bomb went off so he was not injured. If he had been out of it, he would have been peppered with shards of glass.

*Q: Well, what was, how did the political events, you know this Shining Path terrorism affect your operations, or did it?*

RICHARDSON: On consular operations?

*Q: Yes.*

RICHARDSON: I would say that there were just general security concerns. I don't know if it was the Shining Path or not. I was threatened once, my house was once threatened to be bombed. Why threatening? If they were going to bomb, they would have bombed.

*Q: Bombed. Yes.*

RICHARDSON: So, I don't know why anybody would have called up and threatened to bomb my house.

*Q: Well, what was consular work like? ...*

RICHARDSON: Now, there was Ayacucho. We traveled quite extensively in the country, my wife and I, by road and air, but there was one city that we always wanted to visit but that was a hotbed of Sendero Luminoso guerilla activity. That's where it started. And so we never got there. But otherwise we traveled quite extensively. Along the coast we used a car, when we went into the interior to Cuzco and Iquitos we flew. I spent a lot of time down in the south performing American services for the copper company employees down there. The company liked that because instead of having the employees come up and lose time, they just had to provide me with transportation down there and a place to sleep. So they would send a plane for me and take me down.

*Q: Well now ...*

RICHARDSON: Also the missionaries in the interior. I worked very closely with them, the people who were doing the Bible translations.

*Q: Well now, how about, what were sort of the, were you having some of the same troubles you were having in Ecuador about Americans being foot-loose and fancy-free and hiking along the Andes?*

RICHARDSON: No. That was pretty mush past, but at one point I had something like 22 people in prison, all for drug smuggling. They created some excitement for us when they went on a hunger strike. It lasted a couple of weeks.

*Q: Were these real smugglers or were these kids?*

RICHARDSON: No. These were adults. But not professionals. One guy came down with his golf clubs and stuffed his golf bag with cocaine. No, they weren't very smart. But I also had druggies, people who came down simply to indulge in drugs.

*Q: Well, tell me when you get that, were there affects to them playing around with these drugs or were they essentially just sitting there and ...*

RICHARDSON: Getting happier and wasting themselves, but eventually they moved on. I didn't have anyone die on me from drug overdose. I don't understand, there was one couple, they came to me begging for help, there wasn't anything I could do for them unless I take them into a hospital which they refused. They were gray. The only gray color I've ever seen on a European type person, she was dead several days.

*Q: Oh, boy.*

RICHARDSON: But, they were gray.

*Q: Were they willing to go back to the States or?*

RICHARDSON: No.

*Q: Were you able to help that or do they..*

RICHARDSON: I never had to repatriate any of them, they somehow found their way out.

*Q: How were Peruvian jails?*

RICHARDSON: Terrible, terrible. They, but before I got there, we had negotiated one of these treaties where the person could serve his time in his home country and this was popular with Americans because parole and time off for good behavior were much more liberal in the U.S. Federal system than in Peru. But I had one guy who turned it down. He turned it down. He had a caf# going in the prison with a pool table and regular little rackets he had going on, he wasn't about to give that up to go sit in jail in the U.S.

*Q: Were there many students going from Peru to the United States?*

RICHARDSON: Not that many, they, the middle class already had their visas and so they'd have B-1 / B-2's. If they came in for a student, it wouldn't really be anything that we would need to focus on because they came from families that could afford to send their children

to the school and if they were from that social class that couldn't afford it, so they didn't get visas. They were just part of the great poor mass because I had a high refusal rate there.

*Q: But, how about, were there efforts made for Americans to adopt children or anything like that?*

RICHARDSON: I didn't have that in Peru, I had it in Ecuador when I was there. There was an active child adoption activity.

*Q: How does that work?*

RICHARDSON: It works quite smoothly, but on a small scale. It wasn't a big business. There was one lawyer who was very active and he gave satisfaction. What he arranged, you know was he selling babies? But nobody talks and nobody complains ...

*Q: No. That's often the way. Well, how did you find Peruvian society. I mean living in Peru?*

RICHARDSON: Well, I enjoyed it. It's a highly stratified class structure, but it's changing. Can I tell you a story about social-cultural change?

*Q: Yes.*

RICHARDSON: My wife and I went to a dinner party, it was a buffet and the guests were people of our age. Peruvian wives all prepared plates for their husbands and brought the plates to their husbands. Their husbands never went near the buffet table. Well, everybody's getting fed and you know I'm getting hungry and I know my wife's not going over to the table to prepare a plate for me, it wouldn't have occurred to her. Well, what am I going to do? I'll lose face if I go, but I don't want to go hungry. Well, the men and women are separated, but the food was in the men's room. The women would serve their husbands and prepare their plates and go to the adjoining room. Well, I saw my wife, but she was busy talking. She was one of the last women to go to make a plate for herself. So I saw her filling up her plate and I wandered over by the door way leading to the room

where the women were and when she came by I greeted her and said, “Hey, honey, what have you got there.” So she held out her plate like this to show me what she had on her plate and I snatched it out of her hand. [Laughter]. And I went back and rejoined the men. I explained it to her later and she understood. Well, these were people of our generation, our age. A month or two later and it had to have been, it could not have been a longer gap, otherwise it wouldn't have struck me so vividly, we were the oldest people at a dinner party where the guests were the age of the adult children of the previous crowd, they are the age of the adult children and of the same class and we noted that not a single young woman prepared a plate for her husband. Without any hesitation at all every young man went up to the table and filled up his own plate. That was a social cultural change that we observed. I was very, very struck by that.

*Q: Yes, fascinating.*

RICHARDSON: So, a society in the process of change.

*Q: Well, were there any major events in the '80-'83 period?*

RICHARDSON: Well, the big thing was the election.

*Q: Fujimori?*

RICHARDSON: No, no, no. Famous Peruvian author presented himself as a candidate, but he didn't win, it went to Belaunde who had been there 10 years before. That was one of the biggest things.

One brief story before leaving Peru. At a large American missionary station deep in the interior I attended a performance, in English, of a French play, Cyrano de Bergerac, by American students of the station school while behind me someone was explaining the action on the stage to a Quechua-speaking woman in full local dress. I have always counted that evening as one of my most notable cross-cultural experiences.

*Q: Then you left there in 1983?*

RICHARDSON: Right, right and I stopped off for 2 or 3 months, did a TDY as head of the Consular section in St. Paolo, which I enjoyed very much. It was a dynamic city. In those days I walked very briskly, and nobody ever passed me on the street in Lima. I got to San Paolo and elderly women were elbowing me out of the way. That's the difference, it was tremendous experience. I loved the city. You couldn't breath however because of the pollution in the air was so foul.

*Q: Probably much worse now.*

RICHARDSON: Undoubtedly. And there is a district there that had a very high deformed birthrate, you know birth defect rate, I forgot the name of the industrial suburb, but other than that it was great, it was a real pleasure. I would have gone back there in a moment if they had offered it to me.

*Q: What did they offer you?*

RICHARDSON: I got back and I didn't have an assignment. I was in the Department without an assignment. I went around knocking on doors, I went to see Dick Morefield.

*Q: Dick.*

RICHARDSON: Dick Morefield had been my last ConGen in Iran and a hostage. He said well, yes, I've got something for you if you think you can work with a troglodyte.

*Q: With a what?*

RICHARDSON: A troglodyte.

*Q: Oh, my God.*

RICHARDSON: And I said well, I don't have any other job. I would not have had any difficulty working with anyone, yes I'll try it. And I did. And so I went to the Bahamas. But, the problem with this is, that person's daughter is now a high-ranking State Department official.

*Q: Let me just turn this off. Well you went to the Bahamas where he was the ambassador, I take it.*

RICHARDSON: Yes.

*Q: How did that, I mean we don't have to, I mean people are people and public officials, you know we don't have to handle this with kid gloves. How did this affect the embassy and consular work in the Bahamas?*

RICHARDSON: Consular work, it didn't. This was a political, social-political attitude. But, I'll tell you what affect it had on me. Before I got there, he had kicked out his DCM and had appointed the Head of the Consular Section as DCM. Shortly after I got there, within a year, he kicked out the DCM, former Consul General and a new fellow came in and then after a year, he became dissatisfied with the new DCM and he was trying to get rid of him. My fear was that he would ask for me because I seemed to be the only person of rank that he liked. So that tells you ... it didn't affect the consular work. But, it did cause me some concern.

*Q: Well, how, what were the issues in the Bahamas?*

RICHARDSON: Drugs. The Bahamas, the only time of prosperity in the Bahamas is when there is a serious shortage of something in the United States. During the Civil War, it was smuggling guns and ammunition, supplies. During prohibition it was booze and since World War II, it's been drugs.

*Q: Well, I've heard you had Roz Ridgway. She was down there earlier and she was saying this was the port drugs hit.*

RICHARDSON: Yes.

*Q: And this was just when the Bahamas got independence, she was, I think DCM and it was, the big money and all hadn't yet hit and it was a solid, capable young government, but all held ...*

RICHARDSON: But it's so corrupt, that type of money is terribly corrupting.

*Q: Well, were you concerned about the money getting, corrupting our staff in the consular section.*

RICHARDSON: There was no way the visas were the problem. The Bahamas regarded themselves as the 51st state. They'd go see an ophthalmologist in Miami, the same for gynecologist. And you'd go to Florida to have your baby so there were no serious visa problems for Bohemians.

*Q: Were they throwing Americans in jail for drug business or not?*

RICHARDSON: Yes, but they were mules.

*Q: Peru.*

RICHARDSON: In Peru. Those were people, obviously they were small time entrepreneurs, they were coming down to buy a kilo to take back to make a little score for themselves. No, these were mules. Welfare mothers, single mothers on welfare who'd be paid to come over, collect the package and bring it back.

*Q: So what happened to them?*

RICHARDSON: They were, they'd be arrested or better yet they'd be permitted to board the plane and they'd be arrested in the States in the hopes that the information they could give would lead to the person who hired them. One, now I did have one fellow who swallowed a couple of condoms full of cocaine, but this was for personal consumption.

*Q: Yes.*

RICHARDSON: Well, the plane was on the runway, about to take off, when one of the condoms ruptured and he went into a frenzy, a drug induced frenzy, and died right on the runway with his wife there. Now, whether his wife was privy to his activities or not, I had no idea, but I had one dead American and fresh widow on my hands for the weekend, because I couldn't even get the medical examiner to certify to his death until Monday and this was Saturday. So I took her, I took the widow home with me.

*Q: Did ...*

RICHARDSON: But that's the only drug death, I know I had many other deaths. Over 2 million Americans visit the Bahamas annually so they get into all kinds of mischief. I had one tourist, we found him dead at the bottom of the elevator shaft in one of the big hotels. And we don't even know how it happened. How did he get under the elevator? They never found a defective door, you know where they could say oh well, something happened, the door opened and he stepped into a void. They never found that a defective door. We had rapes. Well, these things happen. We had people die on the cruise ship on its way to the Bahamas.

*Q: Do the cruise people take care of these mainly?*

RICHARDSON: Yes. But they unload the body at the first port that they come to.

*Q: Well, did, how did you find, were people in trouble with the police, were they helpful?*

RICHARDSON: I always suspected the police were pretty corrupt, but they were courteous and friendly, and you see what we would be dealing with wasn't anything that threatened them in any way. And so they could afford to be gracious. We didn't give them a lot of trouble. We had one person in prison for murder. I visited him regularly.

*Q: Was Robert Vesco still around?*

RICHARDSON: No, I think he was in Cuba by that time.

*Q: Much to your relief.*

RICHARDSON: [Laughter]. Well, where, I did have one bad moment, well of course there had been this man in Colombia had taken over an island for trans-shipping drugs ... I've forgotten his name and that was a big scandal. They'd finally gotten rid of him, that was before I had arrived. But a man came in and had his passport renewed, nothing wrong with it, we did the usual check, everything was clean, he takes his passport and he leaves. The next day I read in the paper that he is the object of an indictment for a multi-million dollar sugar swindle in New Orleans. [Laughter]. But that broke after I renewed his passport.

*Q: Well, how was the morale of the embassy with this difficult ambassador?*

RICHARDSON: Oh, no problem, it was the DCM's who caught it. And maybe his relations with the Department. But he wasn't difficult for the rest of us. There was one really bright, the Economic/Commercial Officer, his name is now engraved on the wall there at State ...

*Q: He was killed at Grenada.*

RICHARDSON: Yes. And he was impressive, I think it was only his first or second tour. He was impressive. He had just married a local girl, a Bahamian girl, and his next assignment was Grenada and he was visiting the Chief or Police when somebody came in to kill

the Chief of Police and he was killed. What a pity because he was, as I said, he was an impressive young man.

*Q: Well, Cy this is probably a good place to stop, you left the Bahamas in 1983, where did you go?*

RICHARDSON: I inspected for 4 years.

*Q: And then what did you do?*

RICHARDSON: I retired in '91.

*Q: Oh, we might cover the inspections then, now.*

RICHARDSON: There wouldn't be much to them.

*Q: Alright.*

RICHARDSON: We'll cover the inspections. Sure you know what you do in an inspection, you go around, people meet you at the airport and they try their best to get on your good side and occasionally you can do some good.

*Q: Well, did you find any real, you know I hate to dwell on the negative, but as an inspector goes, did you find any cases or problems that were interesting?*

RICHARDSON: Well, I got to Fiji, there was a brand new officer, fresh you know from the A-100 course and he'd taken over the consular section, small as it was and we counted the passports and there was something like 23 of them not accounted for.

*Q: Oh, God.*

RICHARDSON: Well, obviously, he wasn't there long enough to have made a connection to dispose of them, for which I was very glad so, we called that to the Department's

attention for further investigation. But, he'll never take over any post again without going over inventory before he signs for it.

*Q: Ah, well one time I had an inspection come when I was Chief of the Consular Section in Belgrade and we seemed to be missing 25 blank passports. We kept counting and counting and my predecessor had ordered 75 passports instead of the usual hundred and so we were assuming that you order them in batches of 100. And, again, I was very careful from then on.*

RICHARDSON: Yes, well on the, occasionally we could do some good, but there wasn't anything notable. I remember when I left Kinshasa, I noted in the report that they needed closer supervision in the Consular Section because the Consul General was also Supervisory Consul General for neighboring countries. And so she traveled a good bit and when she traveled there was a junior officer from some other agency who was holding down the fort and it was obvious he wasn't paying very much attention to what was going on. Well, later when I was doing a TDY, immediately following retirement, in Lagos the Dutch consul sent me a passport from someone who was applying for a Dutch visa. This person had a Gambian passport containing a US visa issued in Kinshasa.

*Q: Well Zambia was before Anesia.*

RICHARDSON: No, Gambia in West Africa. He's applying for a Dutch visa and she found that he had a visa issued in Kinshasa. She was suspicious.

*Q: Yes, you were saying something like a traveling salesmen.*

RICHARDSON: Yes, he had a visa from some place 2,000 miles away from his home so she brought it to my attention and this convinced me that what I had observed a couple of years before was true. I canceled that visa and shortly thereafter the story broke that the Kinshasa locals had been up to hanky-panky. Not properly supervised, they had a little racket going. And it's weird, it spread so far that somebody would go all the way from

Gambia to Kinshasa, 2,000 miles. Not neighboring countries, Rwanda, Gabon, but all the way from there so they had something going, but that's the only malfeasance I detected.

*Q: How about sexual harassment. It's around this time when people are beginning to pay more attention to that. Was this something you were ever looking for?*

RICHARDSON: I don't remember, I don't think that we ever asked the direct question and when we would have individual chats with the staff. No one ever brought anything like that up to me. We sometimes had some sexually active officers, but if it's consensual, there isn't much you can do.

*Q: Well, then you retired when, in?*

RICHARDSON: June of '91 I inspected and then I retired in '91. But there was one amusing incident, the inspection team arrived in Quito and there was the usual meeting with the nationals. The Chief of the team introduces the other members of the team. Well, I'm at the end of the line, so I'm the last one who was introduced. Well, he mentioned this is Mr. So and So who will be doing, inspecting the political, economic, admin sections. Before he introduced me, well nothing had happened, the nationals just sat there and nodded their heads. He introduces me and there is tumultuous applause. I hadn't been at the post in 10 years, but they remembered me. Well, if it had been a lesser time, if it had been 5 years or less I'd have had to recuse myself from the inspection, but at 10 years, I didn't have to.

I cannot conclude this review of my career without mention of a great satisfaction I experienced one day. There were three people at the counter one day when I wandered into the old Foreign Service Lounge. All three of them had started their FS careers with me as section chief and they were all going on to good assignments. One was on his way to the War College, another was to head up the Vietnamese refugee (boat people) operation

in the Philippines and the third was going to a very good job in the Department. Mr. Chips could not have been more proud and pleased than I was that day.

*Q: Oh, gosh. Well, Cy, I want to thank you very much. This has been fun.*

RICHARDSON: Yes. It has.

End of interview